

ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL

PI AYBOY

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

The Interview:
Tucker Carlson

20Q: Daredevil's
Charlie Cox

Lina Esco,
Constitutional
Warrior

Jason Reitman &
J.K. Simmons on
The Front Runner

An Exclusive
James Bond Comic

Can Drugs Increase
the Peace in
Israel-Palestine?

Holiday Gift Guide

Lindsey Pelas

Tommy Genesis

Heritage: When
Jean Shepherd Met
the Beatles

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PLAYBILL

Jedidiah Jenkins

We've all dreamed of escaping our lives. Jenkins actually did, quitting his day job for a bi-hemisphere bike ride and chronicling it for his devoted Instagram followers. In *Far From Home for the Holidays*, Jenkins (whose father, Peter Jenkins, penned the 1979 travel tome *A Walk Across America*) ruminates on northern rituals from the bottom of the world.



Chris Deacon

After landing at PLAYBOY in 2015 by way of London and *Time Out New York*, Deacon promptly put his stamp on our pages with instant classic layouts not unlike the vintage posters that inspired his foray into design. As creative director, he ushered in 2017's return to nudity with grace and a fresh dose of fun at a time when America desperately needed it.

Stephen Voss

Few capture the essence of Washington, D.C.'s power players like photographer Voss, who provides the Tucker Carlson portraits for this issue's *Playboy Interview*. Although his accolades are many, Voss considers making Mikhail Gorbachev laugh during a photo session to be among his greatest accomplishments.



Ellen von Unwerth

Provocative images of strong women are a hallmark of von Unwerth's work. Pairing the inimitable photographer, whose last PLAYBOY shoot was Pamela Anderson's 2016 pictorial, with ERA advocate and Free the Nipple founder Lina Esco (*The Dawn of a New ERA*) is the perfect marriage of artist and subject.

Luke McGarry

Name an illustrator who better straddles the worlds of art and comedy than McGarry. The Los Angeles (via England) artist strikes again with his rendition of the notorious Bird scooter for *Flipping the Bird*. No stranger to the street himself, he "once got a cease and desist from the city of Santa Monica for drawing too many dicks," he tells us.



Madison Margolin

With *Rebirth in Bethlehem*, Margolin, a writer specializing in Judaism and spirituality ("Jews and drugs," as she puts it), returns to a region where she once lived. Exploring the role of PTSD in Israeli and Palestinian narratives, in a part of the world known for political friction, she sees the issue as a "human, psychological and emotional conflict."

Brin-Jonathan Butler

In *American Chess Masters*, a survey of the tormented prodigies behind the world's most strategic parlor game, Butler contextualizes the significance of 26-year-old Fabiano Caruana and his role in this fall's world championship. The highly respected sports writer's book *The Grandmaster* drops November 6 from Simon & Schuster.



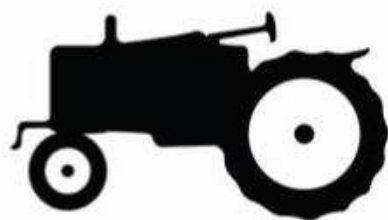
Maxim Loskutoff

In May, *The National Book Review* praised Loskutoff and his debut collection of short stories, *Come West and See*, calling him "a blazing new and original talent." *The Fourth Armada*, a work of historical fiction that explores the brutality of the early 16th century, is the Montana native and former carpenter's first story for PLAYBOY.

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Thank you, USA! The pleasure was ours.



moods of norway





CONTENTS

Departments

- LET'S PLAY** Audacious rapper Tommy Genesis owns her sexy lyrics and her sexuality **19**
- SEX** A new kind of rubber helps you rub her the right way **20**
- DRINKS** Booze brands are putting just as much thought into what goes on their bottles as what goes in them **22**
- PEOPLE** With characteristic grit and charm, social-media star Lindsey Pelas branches out **24**
- GAMING** A U.S. chess master may make history this year; here's an illustrated look at his tormented forebears **26**
- POLITICS** The power to change the world is right there in your pocket, says Ralph Nader **28**
- MOVIES** With *The Front Runner*, director Jason Reitman resurrects a totally 1980s political sex scandal **30**
- CULTURE** Flocks of Birds and bushels of Limes crowd sidewalks nationwide; what's a city to do? **32**
- TRAVEL** A young adventurer finds familial closeness over the holidays—just a few clicks north of Antarctica **34**

ALSO: Panties and pirates in *Drawn Data*; polyamory and pumpkin pie in the *Playboy Advisor*

Features

- INTERVIEW** Tucker Carlson is more than a polarizing pundit; among other things, he's a self-professed moderate **41**
- REBIRTH IN BETHLEHEM** Inside a growing movement with a new approach to the Israel-Palestine peace process **58**
- FICTION** Deadly tech is loose in the desert in T. Jefferson Parker's *The Queen of Majestic* **64**
- DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE** Modern or retro? Either way, our 2018 gift guide has you covered **71**
- 20Q** Charlie Cox, a.k.a. Marvel's Daredevil, gives us a peek behind the mask **92**
- IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOUNTAINS** Why are suicide rates so high in the Western U.S.? **98**
- FICTION** A man, a dog and a monster in Maxim Loskutoff's *The Fourth Armada* **112**
- A TRAIN TO CATCH** It's James Bond as you've never seen him in this exclusive tale of his pre-007 adventures **134**
- PROFILE** Free the Nipple creator Lina Esco sets her sights on the Equal Rights Amendment **140**
- HERITAGE** When the king of Americana met Britain's Fab Four. Plus: Playboy cars; Hef rescues an icon; classic Playmates **155**

Pictorials

- A ROSE IS A ROSE** A dreamy reunion with 2017 PMOY Brook Power **50**
- KNOCKOUT** We're down for the count when it comes to November Playmate Shelby Rose **76**
- SWEATER WEATHER** Baby, it's cold outside...warm up with María Fernanda **104**
- RENAISSANCE WOMAN** December Playmate Jordan Emanuel is a beauty with endless talents **118**
- GOLDEN HOUR** The luminous Maelys Garouis is our guiding light **146**

ON THE COVER (AND OPPOSITE PAGE) Shelby Rose, photographed by Kyle Deleu.



PLAYBOY

HUGH M. HEFNER

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1953-2017

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EDITORIAL

ANNA DEL GAIZO, RYAN GAJEWSKI, ELIZABETH SUMAN **SENIOR EDITORS**

ARIELA KOZIN, ANITA LITTLE **FEATURES EDITORS**

WINIFRED ORMOND **COPY CHIEF**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: DANIELLE BACHER, JESSICA P. OGILVIE, STEPHEN REBELLO, ADAM SKOLNICK, ERIC SPITZNAGEL

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

ERICA LOEWY **ART DIRECTOR**

AARON LUCAS **ART MANAGER**

NATALIE ALVARADO **PHOTO RESEARCHER AND ASSET COORDINATOR**

SANDRA EVANS **PHOTO COORDINATOR**

CHRISTIE HARTMANN **DIRECTOR, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

JOEY COOMBE **ARCHIVIST, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

AMY KASTNER-DROWN **SENIOR DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST, PLAYBOY ARCHIVES**

EVAN WOODS **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER AND VIDEOGRAPHER**

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS: KYLE DELEU, ALI MITTON, DOVE SHORE, CHRISTOPHER VON STEINBACH

PRODUCTION

LESLEY K. RIPPON **PRODUCTION DIRECTOR**

PUBLIC RELATIONS

TERI THOMERSON **SENIOR DIRECTOR, PUBLIC RELATIONS;** TAMAR APRAHAMIAN **SENIOR DIRECTOR, PUBLICITY**

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ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

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DEAR PLAYBOY

FOR ONE AND ALL

I'm a bisexual woman who has been enjoying a PLAYBOY subscription since the Amazon Prime series about Hugh Hefner, *American Playboy*, came out last April. I tend to prefer plus-size women like Ashley Graham and Stefania Ferrario but never saw similarly voluptuous models in your pages—until the September/October issue. Jocelyn Corona is the most breathtaking woman I've ever seen! The instant I came across her pictorial (*La Reina*), my heart started beating faster. I'm glad my favorite magazine is becoming more inclusive. I love that instead of "Entertainment for Men" PLAYBOY now proclaims to be "Entertainment for All"! Keep up the good work—and please continue to feature full-figured women.

*Jennie Watters
Millbury, Massachusetts*

BROWN BAGGING IT?

Thank you for the fantastic pictorials and for keeping me up on the latest trends. You've always stated you're a trendsetter and a step ahead of the curve. You must be; you changed the world. How about another change that will help our world? What would it take to get rid of the plastic cover on your magazine? *National Geographic* now uses paper. Will you step up again as a leader and do the same? We have only one blue planet to call home, and we must work to protect it.

*Gregg Jurgens
Chewelah, Washington*

Great question, Gregg. Paper mailers would be a return to our roots: Once upon a time, subscribers received their copies in modest brown-paper envelopes. We're in discussions with our printer and distributor about the possibility of reviving this practice. Stay tuned.

GROW YOUR OWN WAY

Josh Tickell's proposal to use regenerative agriculture as a solution to global warming, while promising, depends for its implementation on a sea change in U.S. political forces—one that, at 61, I doubt will happen in my lifetime (*Planet Earth Goes to Washington*, September/October). I've become a cynic. Even in "green" Seattle, weeks of smoke-filled skies caused by wildfires have not galvanized the necessary consortiums of environmental, governmental and industry groups to address the poor forest-management policies that, combined with climate change, have resulted in forests ripe for burning. If smoke-congested air in the West and catastrophic storms and floods in the East don't get voters' attention, I'm not sure what

will. Change happens incrementally, and as long as mainstream American voters of all ages fail to appreciate the need for specific actions to combat climate change, "elegant solutions" such as regenerative agriculture will never be implemented. Millennials must not only vote for progressive candidates but also convince their baby boomer elders to do the same.

*Margaret Suman
Seattle, Washington*

FANTASY GAME

October Playmate Olga de Mar has a captivating beauty (*Game Set Match*, September/October). I dream of playing tennis with her.

*Joe Zamora
Soledad, California*

HONOR ROLL

I was happy to see the return of your annual college pictorial (*Homecoming*, September/October). And a special thank-you for featuring Miami Dade College beauty Samantha

Fernandez. She has an amazing smile! I'd love to see more of her in PLAYBOY.

*Paul Marini
Erie, Pennsylvania*

I'm grateful to the magazine for bringing back the college pictorial. It has been a favorite of mine over the years. It looks like I need to get back and visit Arizona State University soon!

*Brian Johnson
Jacksonville, Florida*

WELCOME BACK

Since re-subscribing, I've been amazed at how good the magazine has become. The September/October edition is no exception. Michael Shannon, Teyana Taylor, campus consent, rhino conservationists, Jonathan Tasini and the models—absolutely stunning from beginning to end. Your photographers are crushing it. I'd been a subscriber since the early 1980s, when I was a translator in the Army, but took a hiatus after I started to build my company. When I saw



All hail the queen: Jocelyn Corona.

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DEAR PLAYBOY

the newest iteration, I knew it was time to come back. Hugh Hefner got me interested; Cooper and the new crew got me back. Thank you.

*Kristian Niemi
Columbia, South Carolina*

EARLY VOTING

Kirby Griffin gets my vote for 2019 Playmate of the Year (*God Bless Americus*, September/October). Her smile is captivating. It's great you chose a beautiful, down-to-earth Southern girl.

*Walter Sherfey
Jonesborough, Tennessee*

PREACH, SOFIA

Kudos on the 20Q with Sofia Boutella (September/October). What a terrific combination of creative ability and a strong voice. "Women matter. You need to be a feminist. If you're not, go fuck yourself." Here's hoping PLAYBOY's primarily male readership appreciates her talent and embraces her point of view.

*Victor Smith
Selma, Oregon*

HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTEST

Until recently I'd never purchased a PLAYBOY. Now I have two issues on my coffee table. Both contain amazing images from Portuguese photographer Ana Dias. Her work, featured in *Lifesaver* (July/August) and *Game Set Match* (September/October) is unique, fun and wholesome—yet incredibly sexy. Please give us more! I'm a middle-age, white, heterosexual female executive, and male guests visiting my condo now think I'm extremely cool thanks to my PLAYBOYS.

*Sherry Satterwhite
Atlanta, Georgia*

NO LAUGHING MATTER

Your joke about Humboldt County police and motorists was reprehensible (*Party Jokes*, September/October). Were your editors not aware of the tragic bus accident that killed 16 and injured 13 earlier this year in Humboldt, Saskatchewan?

*Gordon Robert
Vancouver, British Columbia*

Rest assured that we would never make light of such a tragedy. The joke had nothing to do



God bless Boutella!

with a crash and was set in a California county, not a Canadian city.

PICTURE-PERFECT

Over the years you've published thousands of photos, some of them superb. One of my favorites appeared in the early 1970s. It's a slick shot of a beautifully shaped breast. The nipple is being gently held between the long-nailed fingers of another woman. I liked the photo so much I cut it out and glued it to the center of my Camaro's steering wheel and covered it with an antique clock's round glass faceplate. It was stunning. The station attendants would come out to see it whenever I got gas. I was famous. My female passengers thought it was hot—and what an icebreaker! That picture was truly unique. I'll never forget it.

*Donald Hodgins
Wixom, Michigan*

Ah, memories. That indelible image was shot by Pete Turner and first appeared in our

December 1971 issue on page 137; we've reprinted it several times.

LEUNG'S LINGERIE

Your profile of lingerie designer Yeha Leung was a welcome surprise. So few men's publications celebrate women's lingerie—strange, given that it can be the sexiest thing a woman owns. Sometimes seeing a woman in lingerie is sexier than seeing her nude. The fact that this young designer is turning underclothing into beautiful artwork, and that Hollywood's heavy hitters are taking notice, gives me hope that more men will start paying attention to what they're taking off.

*Chadwick Holmes
Belvidere, Illinois*

ENTERTAINMENT FOR MEL

I recently read your article on PLAYBOY's appearances in major motion pictures (*Our Favorite Cameos*, July/August). I was surprised you overlooked a joke involving your publication in Mel Brooks's *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*. Why didn't that movie make the list?

*Rod Jefferson
Yardley, Pennsylvania*

Like the character in Brooks's film who fondly caresses the unfurled Centerfold of a Braille (prop) copy of our magazine, we were blind not to see it.

POLYPHONIC SPREE

Keep printing fiction like *Madrigal* (September/October): many-voiced (like its musical namesake), circular and totally confounding. Reading it made my head spin—in a good way.

*Jake Byrnes
Huntington, New York*

COVER STORY

Our Rabbit knows how to stay warm, finding shelter in the fuzzy headwear of November Playmate Shelby Rose. It's going to be one cozy winter.



E-mail letters@playboy.com, or write
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WORLD OF PLAYBOY



Mad for Moschino

"I follow my inspiration to wherever it goes," Jeremy Scott once said. This fall, the Moschino creative director no doubt found plenty to follow at our Rabbit's newest den. On September 6, Scott christened the not-yet-opened Playboy Club New York with an exclusive afterparty following the New York Fashion Week debut of his spring-summer 2019 collection, Meta Muse. Party highlights included Cardi B (left) singing along to her hit "Bodak Yellow" as Stella Maxwell, Quavo, Kim Petras and others danced along.



1. Tiffany Haddish leans in. 2. Scott with actress Dove Cameron. 3. Paris Jackson, joined by Miles Richie, strikes a pose in Moschino. 4. Migos member Quavo smolders. 5. Cardi B and Aijona Alexis with the man of the hour.



Midsummer Night's Dream Scenes

Back in July, our annual summer bacchanal celebrated its third year as the season's sexiest party in Sin City. MSND 2018 was hosted by Halsey, who hit the red carpet in a custom-made sartorial shout-out to the iconic Bunny suit. The Grammy nominee, a fixture on Playboy's pages and stages since her December 2015 debut in the magazine, brought the sleepwear-saturated crowd of 4,000 to its feet with such hits as "Closer" and "Bad at Love." Other VIPs gracing the Marquee Nightclub at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas included 10 Playmates (pictured below with Cooper Hefner) and hip-hop artist French Montana. We danced all night and into the morning light with an endless stream of bangers from DJ Eric DLux.



A Sensually Spooky Soiree

Nobody throws a costume party like the Rabbit. Following our annual summer residency at TAO Beach, we return to Las Vegas for Playboy Presents Día de los Muertos, a happily haunted celebration going down November 1 at TAO Nightclub. Guests and Playmates will enjoy a night of drinks, dancing and no shortage of Day of the Dead decor. (August 2018 Playmate Lorena Medina, above, shows how it's done.) For more information, visit playboy.com.

Playboy ♥ NY

On September 12, the Playboy Club New York opened its doors in Manhattan—for the first time in three decades. At the center of the jam-packed event: our beloved Bunnies, including December Playmate Jordan Emanuel (pictured below, on left). For reservations, visit playboyclubnyc.com.

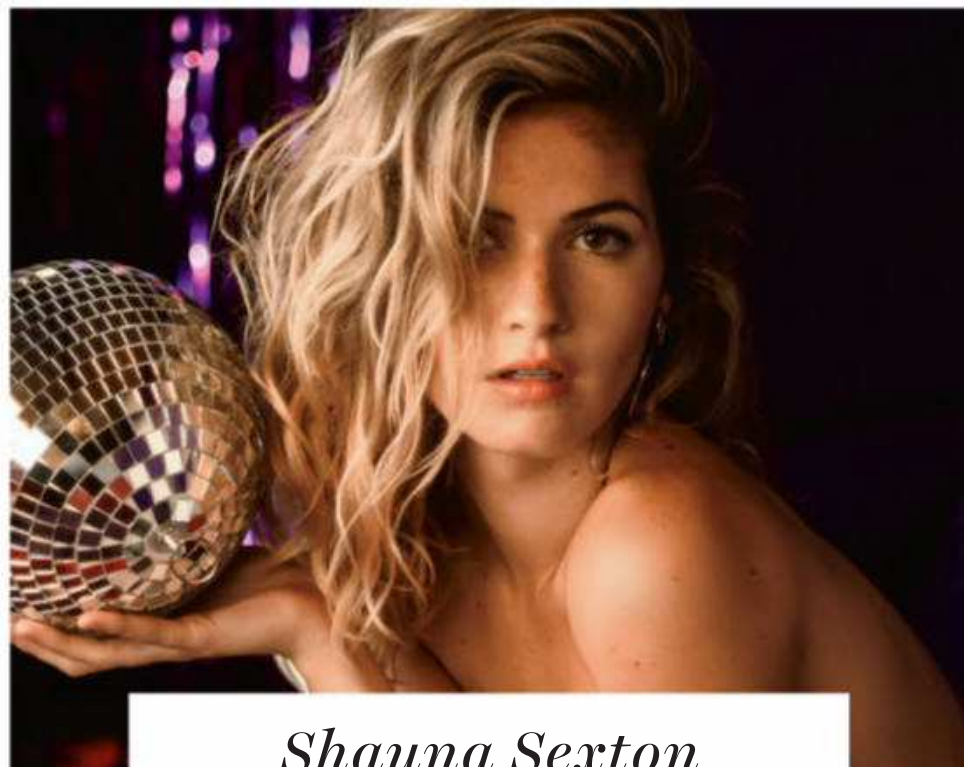




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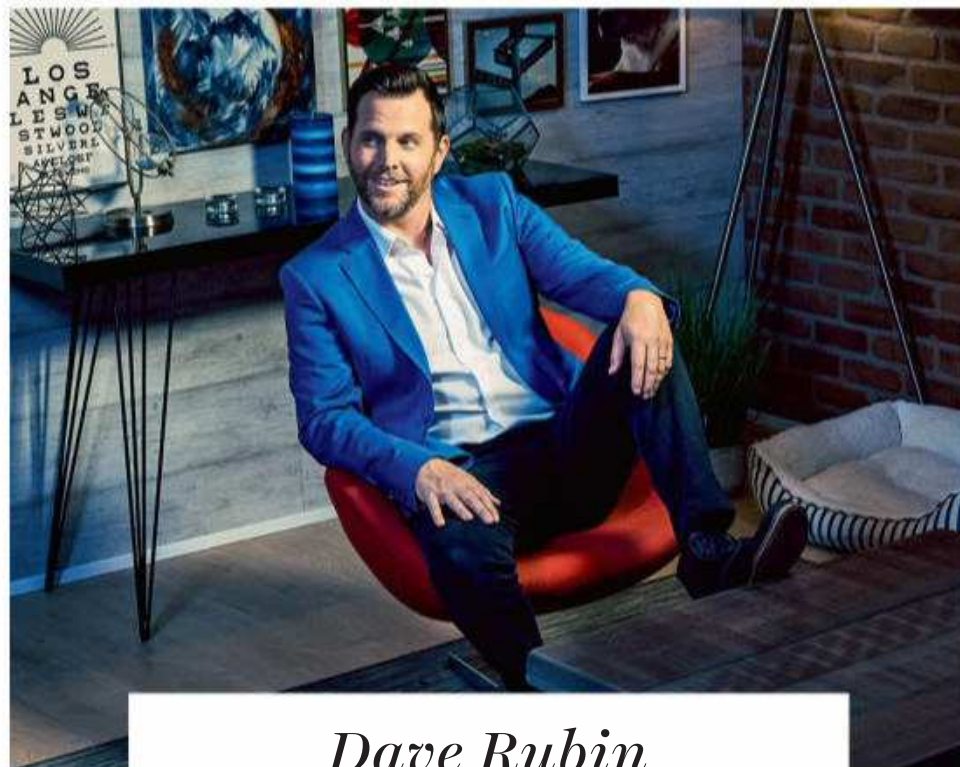
GALLERIES



Shauna Sexton

Vet tech turned May 2018 Playmate Shauna Sexton headlines a new gallery, this time shot by Melissa Cartagena, whose Docile Project celebrates women's sensuality "as a source of inspiration...to live freely and without taboos."

PROFILES



Dave Rubin

Following Rubin's monthlong break from social media, PLAYBOY profiles the "classical liberal" host of *The Rubin Report*, a streaming talk show that has become a safe haven for members of the controversial Intellectual Dark Web.

HERITAGE

Telling Tails

To toast Playboy Club New York's opening, we're spotlighting the women who over the decades turned the Bunny suit into a cherished piece of Americana. Features include never-before-seen photos of 1960s Bunnies as well as interviews with the New York club's seamstress and Head Bunnies.



CELEBRITIES



Ezra Miller

With *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* out in November, the actor—who's also DC's big-screen Flash—opens up about holding down two major franchises while maintaining his identity and impressive style.

CULTURE

The Smoking Nun

In *Sisters of the Valley*, PLAYBOY editor Ariela Kozin lights up with a collective of "feminist nuns" who are growing weed and producing CBD products in Merced, California. "Our only religion is cannabis," says founder Sister Kate, "and we fashion ourselves after our Beguine mothers."



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LET'S PLAY

TOMMY GENESIS

For Tommy Genesis, this moment has been a long time coming—and if that were a Tommy Genesis lyric, it would definitely be a double entendre. The rapper dropped her first mixtape, *World Vision*, in 2015 and has since released one audacious music video after another, including the self-directed “Tommy,” featuring plenty of nude writhing in a bathtub. Her gutsy style and unabashedly sexualized tracks have garnered her a devoted fan base. “I once thought, Wouldn’t it be awesome if everybody could listen to the song, whatever your age? But then I didn’t feel like I was being true to how I write,” the half-Swedish, half-Tamil musician says. “If I’m saying, ‘You gon’ like the pussy, but I ain’t no pussy’—yeah, that’s about me. That is how I feel.” She even used her music’s raw soul-searching as a way to come out as bisexual. (“I never thought it was shocking.”) Having toured with Dua Lipa earlier this year, she’s finally dropping her self-titled debut this fall; her fiery single “100 Bad” has already popped up on HBO’s *Insecure*. “I’m in this in-between phase between who I was and who I am,” she says. “Nothing feels like anything until my album comes out.”—*Ryan Gajewski*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
RICK RODNEY





Wearable sex toys?
Lorals is rethinking
female pleasure.

SEX

Things are getting hot and heavy, and you both stumble toward the bedroom. After getting naked, you start making your way downtown, moving fast. You then sit up and reach for the dental dam on the nightstand. What's that? You don't? Because "What's a dental dam?"

If you're unfamiliar with the unisex prophylactic known as a dental dam, you're among the majority of sexual beings. Dental dams are thin latex squares you place over a vagina or anus during oral sex to prevent STI transmission. They're often packaged in clunky wrappers and manufactured by companies with clinical names such as HandiDam, Crosstex and

BY **SOFIA
BARRETT-
IBARRIA**

Trustex. Dams also cost more than condoms and are exponentially harder to buy (good luck finding them at CVS). Overall,

despite their intention to make oral sex safer, they end up making it feel like a chore, sending an unfair message to women that they deserve neither safe cunnilingus nor any version of it.

"Stretching a piece of rubber over someone's private parts is not aesthetically pleasing," says Dr. Damian Jacob Sendler, a New York-based clinical sexologist. "There has never been a serious campaign promoting the use of dams for people who enjoy oral sex."

Therein lies the problem. National rates of STIs are reaching record highs, yet culturally, safe sex has remained synonymous with condoms, which are deeply entrenched in our consumer consciousness thanks to their ubiquity, affordability and chic brand names such as Skyn and Trojan. In fact, *Research and Markets* estimates that by 2021 the global condom market will be worth nearly \$10 billion. "But

Hot Dam

*Why the most overlooked prophylactic may finally
make a dent in bedrooms across America*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **EVAN WOODS**



when it comes to the dental dam, everybody thinks of them as a laughingstock and incredibly unsexy,” says Melanie Cristol, founder of Lorals, a brand she hopes will modernize the dental dam industry.

Dams’ limited use can be traced to the fact that they weren’t intended for oral sex. The first dental dam was invented by dentist Sanford Barnum in 1864 as a tool for isolating a tooth from the rest of the oral cavity. It was only during the HIV epidemic of the 1980s that we co-opted dams for safer sex.

Cristol says her early experiences with dental dams were disappointing—that is, when she could track one down. Their sale is limited almost exclusively to sex-toy stores, Planned Parenthood clinics and online retailers. Even then, they can be a hard sell to a new partner. According to a 2010 study published in the journal *Sexual Health*, only 10 percent of queer women have ever used a dam, and only two percent use them regularly. “It moves up and down on the body. It can go up your nose and into your mouth. It’s hard to breathe. You can choke on it,” Cristol says. “It really detracts from the experience.”

Thus the inspiration behind Cristol’s Lorals, a line of lingerie-like latex designed to be worn during oral sex. Cut like panties and manufactured from FDA-approved materials, Lorals is just one tangible example of a growing trend of enterprising, sex-positive women looking to reclaim female pleasure in the bedroom. For Cristol, that meant reengineering the dam to resemble a bedroom staple that prioritizes not only women’s sex lives but also their health. “There wasn’t a product out there that looked at women’s bodies and tried to figure out the best way to create an STD-prevention device for cunnilingus and rimming,” she says. “I just set off on this quest to try to figure out how to make a better version.”

As it awaits approval from the FDA to market Lorals as an STI-prevention method, the company currently sells its panties as a wearable sex toy. That’s notable because, though blow jobs are commonplace in most heterosexual relationships, studies indicate that more than a third of women need direct clitoral stimulation—like the kind received during oral sex—to reach orgasm. Culturally, cunnilingus is still considered a bedroom novelty. One goal

of Lorals is to motivate men to consider cunnilingus as often as they expect a blow job.

Of course, it will take more than Lorals or DAM—another reimagining of the prophylactic (see *Can You Engineer Good Oral?*, right)—to convince men as well as women to go down on their partners with dam in hand. Enter the women of O.school. Founded by San Francisco-based entrepreneur Andrea Barrica in November 2017, O.school aims to educate people of all backgrounds and sexualities via live streaming and female instructors who are primarily queer and women of color. As O.school’s Kenna Cook told *Glamour* before the site’s launch, “When I talk about dental dams, it’s usually the first time people have seen one. We have almost never been shown barrier protection negotiations before oral sex in any media. I think men—and women—don’t want to look inexperienced.” Similarly, Barrica tells *PLAYBOY*,

“When you reconnect someone to their body, their life changes. They know what they want.”

Media adoption, especially in porn, may help. Sexologist Chris Donaghue, author of *Sex Outside the Lines*, suggests, “Dental dams need to become eroticized to be used more often. Most men still learn about sexuality from porn, which doesn’t show the use of dental dams.” As with all new experiences tied to sex and sexuality, the answer begins with education and exploration. But even with an enthusiastic partner, internalized shame about the way their vaginas look, smell or taste makes some women hesitant to receive oral sex. In a survey of her customers, Cristol found that “four out of five women had declined oral sex when they wanted it, not just because of STDs but because sometimes, early in a relationship, it feels too intimate, or because they weren’t in the right head space to participate.”

In the end, the dental dam renaissance isn’t just a push to correct the product’s design flaws and make a buck in the process. It’s a case of women creating more avenues for safe, mutual pleasure. “Women do crave oral sex. It’s a gift you’re receiving from your partner. For those few minutes, or many minutes, it’s all about you and about your pleasure,” Cristol says. “We’re opening up this option of amazing oral sex for women, whenever they want it, wherever they want it.” ■

***More than
a third
of women
need direct
clitoral
stimulation
to orgasm.***

CAN YOU ENGINEER GOOD ORAL?

As a product-design student at New York’s Parsons the New School of Design, **Joya Widney** has focused her thesis work on reimagining sex toys from a queer perspective. Here, the budding designer and self-billed dental dam historian tells *PLAYBOY* about DAM, her pleasure-minded vision for the prophylactic and why she thinks it has been ignored for so long.

Your adolescent experience with sex education focused mostly on condom use. In fact, you didn’t discover dental dams until college. How did that impact your sexuality?

We’re socialized to think that without a penis, there can’t be sex. As a queer woman, safer sex was never something I had to think about. For people who can’t get pregnant, it seems like sex can be riskless. Realizing I could get an STI involved unlearning heterosexual perceptions of what counts as “sex.” It’s not just straight people who laugh about dental dams; queer people laugh about them too.

You can’t go deep during oral if you’re holding a piece of latex over a vagina. How will DAM, which has yet to be manufactured, theoretically make up for this?

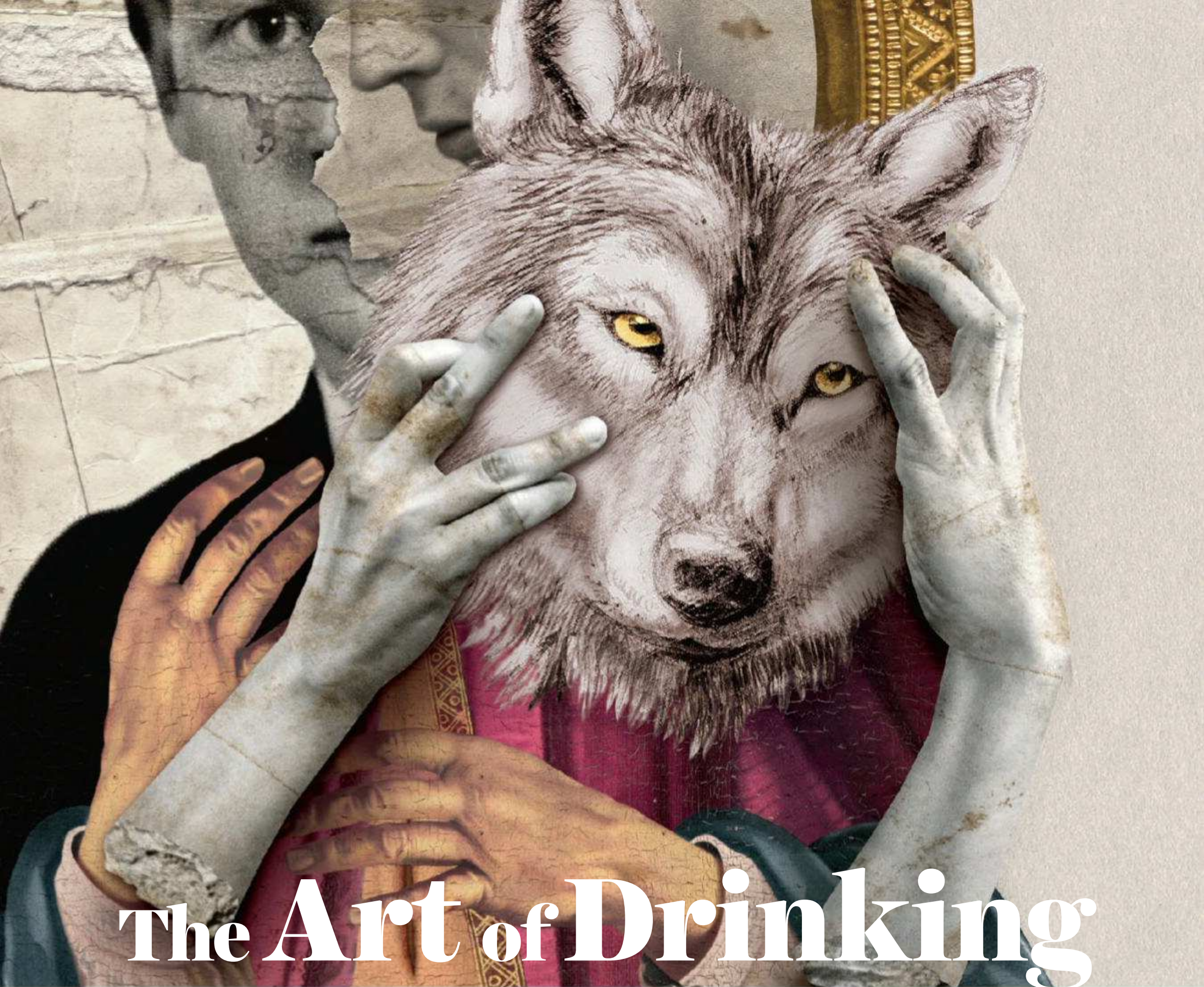
One of the biggest issues with dental dams is that while incredibly thin, they don’t translate the intimate texture of a tongue. It’s generalized pressure. You don’t really feel like it’s licking. And there’s no plastic in existence, I believe, that will ever allow for that. So it made more sense to add to the dam versus trying to make it thinner. DAM has an indent for users to stick their tongue in so they have more range of motion, and my dental dam is covered on the interior with a texture similar to a tongue’s. The harness is also designed so the dental dam hugs the body.

Explain the purpose of a harness.

The dam needed to be wearable—something that would fit all body types, that would move with the body in the ways you’re used to—to truly be pleasurable.

You also departed from latex, opting to design DAM as silicone-based. Why?

By using plastic we have a dam that’s sanitizeable and reusable, making it more cost-effective. Also, silicone is hypoallergenic. There’s no real alternative on the market.



The Art of Drinking

*Mixology may be an art, but there are no starving artists in the spirits world—only advertisers. **Billy Lyons** talks to the country's top label makers about what goes into selling you a drink*

While history has seen tremendous changes in the way we consume alcohol—merlot and Moscow mules are now sold in cans—the connection we have with a spirit still likely begins with the bottle. Case in point: Moët & Chandon has barely updated the Dom Pérignon label since it became part of the company's portfolio, perhaps because many people believe that French monk Pierre Pérignon designed the label himself for his namesake *cuvée* in the 17th century and that it constitutes the first known hand-

written wine label. As false as that claim may be, a 1930s ad for the champagne's 1929 vintage showcases a label nearly identical to the 2009 vintage's. That's because many casual drinkers still make their booze purchases based on the aesthetics—whether familiar, rare or peculiar—of the bottles. That's all the more true during the season of giving, when the realization that you're heading to a holiday party giftless lands you in the fluorescent maze of your local beverage depot.

Today in the United States, drinkers are consuming more alcohol than ever before, and the industry will pull in almost \$160 billion in revenue by New Year's Eve, according to Statista. While it's impossible to nail down the exact number of distilleries, wineries and spirits producers operating around the world, the largest distributor, Diageo, estimates shipping more than 200 million units this year. In other words, myriad options line your corner store, and spirits companies know



DRINKS

they must work diligently to impress you from a crowded shelf.

Enter the artists, designers and marketers, such as Julia Childress, who are responsible for turning your passing glance into a long-term relationship that results in cash sales. Childress is the chief marketing officer and a graphic designer for Schilling Cider, and she has the unique advantage of seeing how her designs directly impact the company's sales. "Our branding is close to 50 percent of our overall marketing strategy," she says. "The reason we have loyal customers is because of the liquid inside, but our 'look' is our biggest selling point."

Citing Nielsen market research, *Forbes* reported in-store hard-cider sales grew by seven percent in 2018's first quarter. But as Childress notes, when craft cider first hit shelves at mainstream retailers en masse around 2012, brands played it safe with clean, literal designs, riding the coattails of the leading craft beers. Apples, trees and other natural imagery—think Angry Orchard's and Stella Artois Cidre's packaging—were common themes. By contrast, Schilling Hard Cider cans feature a pink flamingo and a bearded lumberjack smoking a pipe, among other kitschy graphics. Designs are also nostalgic; Childress's fondness for the Toys "R" Us mascot, Geoffrey the Giraffe, for example, inspired the use of a giraffe in outer space on the Schilling Hard Cider Excelsior can. "A good design is a combination of art and psychology," says Childress. "It should be aesthetically pleasing while also evoking the emotions and thoughts intended by its creator."

While Childress notes it would be easier to incorporate controversial images, it wouldn't align with the brand's story, and having a story behind the visual is what keeps consumers coming back for more. "The design always comes from the story of the product," says Azar Kazimir, creative director of Berlin-based Michelberger Booze, whose psychedelic paintings are inspired by the flavor notes of the herbal liqueur bottles they adorn. "When we look at Michelberger Forest and Mountain, the nature of the drinks is reflected in the bottle design. They live in the world of old German fairy tales, so one bottle is set in a forest and the other in the mountains."

Landing on an image that is both eye-catching and heartfelt is no easy feat. "We pay close attention to trends," Childress explains. "When we're creating a new label, I make three to five mock-ups that we argue about in the

office and in focus groups. We fine-tune those, then publish the variations via social media and ask for feedback."

But brands that closely track trends can easily stumble into gimmicks. In 2011, for example, at the height of the 3-D film craze, the Kraken, a black spiced rum, released a limited-edition label that was, yes, 3-D.

The Kraken's current label is the work of London-based Stranger & Stranger, one of many full-service agencies that grow their businesses not just on their ability to deliver clients new labels but on providing research that proves the labels will attract new customers. Stranger & Stranger—whose clients include Martini & Rossi bitters, Hangar 1 vodka, Woolf/Sung whiskeys and even Bertolli olive



Opposite and above: Stranger & Stranger's design for Woolf/Sung's 1972 single-malt whiskey "The Hunter" is inspired by man's "hunt" for the perfect cask.



From left: Schilling Hard Cider Grapefruit and Chill; Michelberger's herbal liqueurs, inspired by German folk tales.

oil—offers services that range from organizing focus groups to building business plans. And the outfit is small, with fewer than 50 employees. "The Kraken was a great client because they had insight into a tired old brand and gave us a one-line brief: 'Take a bite out of Captain Morgan,'" founder Kevin Shaw recalls. Indeed, the image of a wide-eyed mythical sea monster extending its tentacles around a Victorian-era glass jug is the antithesis of a gloating cartoon pirate.

Perhaps no beverage brand's label has personified a lifestyle better than Sailor Jerry's, created by the world-famous tattoo artist Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins. Although he passed away in 1973, his legacy is preserved through the bottles of spiced rum that bear his moniker and designs. The iconic brand, though recently updated, has always focused on Collins's home base of Oahu, with a hula girl strumming a ukulele and Sailor Jerry's own signature perfectly printed across the label. With palm trees, the ocean and a Hawaiian island in the background, the label illustrates how alcohol can transport you far away from your current state of mind.

Steven Grasse, founder and chief executive officer of Philadelphia-based Quaker City Mercantile, is the man chiefly responsible for updating the decades-old rum into a modern lifestyle brand. "Our design philosophy is simple: We want our brands to look as though they've been around for years. With the designs, we're careful not to modify Norman Collins's artwork, because that's what makes the brand authentic. We might design elements around it—for example, in April we placed the signature in a black medallion—but the hula girl artwork is exactly as Norman drew it." Grasse also notes that thanks to his 20-year relationship with the Sailor Jerry brand, he's so familiar with the designs that he and his team are able to call them from memory. "Sometimes we know exactly what we're looking for," he says, "and sometimes we go through the archives and find inspiration there."

Sailor Jerry's legacy proves that no matter the visual tactics employed, heartfelt design is just one step in a brand's strategy of ingratiating itself with consumers. "I do think customers will buy based on label design alone," Kazimir admits. "But if there's nothing behind the design, no great product or authentic story, they'll buy once and forget you. Design just gets your foot in the door. If you want your customers to keep coming back, you'd better have a great drink."



Talk to Me

Three years after becoming the world's social-media siren, **Lindsey Pelas** is flipping the script



PEOPLE

The private jet was on fire, and Lindsey Pelas felt certain she was going to die. It was 2015, and she was flying to Los Angeles from Colorado with Dan Bilzerian, the brawny “King of Instagram” who’d helped her go viral the year before. After meeting her at the Playboy Mansion (she’d appeared on our Playboy Plus website in 2014), Bilzerian had produced a slow-motion video of Pelas jogging in a drastically undersized tank top. It garnered more than 10 million YouTube views and catapulted her from bartending to cashing in on Instagram, where she now has 7.7 million followers, and eventually led to her own highly rated podcast—but first let’s return to the burning jet.

It was accelerating down the runway when the brakes caught fire.

“The pilot was like, ‘*Everybody off the plane!*’” recalls Pelas. The aircraft screeched to a halt and the passengers made it out unharmed, but the trauma lingered. “It’s the most horrifying thing when you think you might actually die,” she says.

Now 27, Pelas would never have predicted she’d end up on a private jet, let alone nearly perish aboard one. She grew up in backwoods Loranger, Louisiana and was raised by a “super redneck” mom and a dad who has lost at least one boat to a hurricane. In grade school she weaned herself off the regional twang by mimicking the characters on *Barney & Friends*. As a sassy teenager voted “most ambitious” in high school, she landed an academic college scholarship, and when she transferred to Louisiana State University to pursue a history degree, Pelas supported herself with a full-time job at Hooters.

“Customers are mean because you’re pretty, and they’re mean because they think you’re there to be their slave,” she says. “Someone called me a slut to my face, and my general manager literally threw him out. I was like, ‘Oh, I finally got one!’”

Other stories from that period don’t end as

well. While at LSU, Pelas was assaulted in a bar. “A guy grabbed underneath my skirt,” she says. “He grabbed me—I mean grabbed me on my vagina, enough to be like, *Oh my God*. I was like, ‘What the fuck are you doing?’ The guy acted like, ‘Oh yeah, just did that.’” When she went to security, one of the bouncers replied, “Well, are you over it?” She left sobbing and with a migraine. The intensity of the assault, paired with the callous response—“the good-old-boy system,” she calls it—still infuriates and dumbfounds her.

Nevertheless, Pelas refused to change how she presents herself. She’s a proud and increasingly vocal feminist, even though she’s often accused of reinforcing certain obvious if outdated stereotypes.

“A lot of people would say, ‘You being sexy all the time is contributing to this idea that that’s your only value.’ I really deeply thought about that—am I a hypocrite?” She goes on: “To be honest, I truly love to feel like a peacock flaunting my feathers. And I don’t think that asks for me to be demeaned.”

There’s something undeniably genuine about the way she works complex feelings into a clear feminist stance. She exudes a sticks-and-stones realness, and her no-nonsense poise suggests a lifestyle that has evolved since her flaming-jet days. (She’s currently more interested in lying low, working and hitting the gym.) Over a two-hour conversation she barely breaks eye contact to check her



phone. For all her magnetism, Pelas is a great listener, so it follows that she’s a natural-born interviewer.

Eyes Up Here, the podcast Pelas launched this past spring, showcases the same sharp wit she deploys on Twitter. If it seems ironic that a woman who became famous for her breathtaking appearance would choose a nonvisual medium, well, that’s the point. It’s right there in the title.

During lively interviews with models, actresses and internet entrepreneurs, Pelas frequently asks guests to share their own experiences combating sexism. They seldom surprise her—they’re too close to her own—but after years of facing catcallers, trolls and worse, she maintains an open heart.

“The internet has become such an easy place to be evil and mean,” she says, “but it’s also a place where people who didn’t have a voice get to share their stories.” Pelas pauses, summoning a conclusion that, like her decision to start a podcast, is nicely counterintuitive. “I feel like the most beautiful part of the internet is learning to treat each other better.” ■

“To be honest, I love to feel like a peacock flaunting my feathers.”



GAMING

AMERICAN CHESS MASTERS

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

A gallery of greatness and madness—and a millennial master who just might break the cycle

BY BRIN-JONATHAN BUTLER ILLUSTRATIONS BY NATHAN GELGUD

This November, an American will have a shot at becoming the undisputed world chess champion—the first such opportunity since Bobby Fischer captured the world's imagination in 1972. Fabiano Caruana, 26 years old and currently the world's second-highest-rated player, will face 27-year-old Norwegian Magnus Carlsen, reigning world

champion and the highest-rated player in history. Caruana has the chance to step out from under the long, dark shadow cast by Fischer and other tormented geniuses of American chess. Join us as we profile Caruana and five others, weaving a tale of prodigious talent and unchecked obsession.

THE RISE OF CHESS IN AMERICA BEGINS IN ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS. **PAUL MORPHY** WAS BORN WEALTHY IN 1837 AND WAS ALREADY A **SPOOKY CHILD PRODIGY** BY THE AGE OF NINE.



HE TRAVELED ACROSS EUROPE AND TOURED ROYAL COURTS, LEAVING A TRAIL OF VANQUISHED ADVERSARIES.

AMERICAN MEDIA DECLARED A STATE OF "MORPHY MANIA."

IN 1859, MORPHY, THEN 22, RETURNED HOME A HERO—AND SUDDENLY ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT. HE STARTED A LAW PRACTICE BUT, ACCORDING TO LEGEND, ALIENATED HIS CLIENTS WITH OBSESSIVE RANTS ABOUT CHESS.

AFTER THE PRACTICE WENT UNDER, MORPHY WANDERED THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS, TALKING TO HIMSELF IN FRENCH AND THWARTING HIS FAMILY'S ATTEMPTS TO COMMIT HIM TO A MENTAL ASYLUM.

REPORTS ABOUND THAT MORPHY WAS FOUND DEAD IN HIS BATHTUB SURROUNDED BY A CIRCLE OF WOMEN'S SHOES—ALL OF WHICH GIVES "MORPHY MANIA" A VERY DIFFERENT MEANING.



BORN IN PRAGUE IN 1836, **WILHELM STEINITZ** LEARNED THE GAME AT 12 AND BY HIS MID-20s WAS KNOWN AS "THE AUSTRIAN MORPHY." STEINITZ SETTLED IN NEW YORK IN 1883, THREE YEARS BEFORE HE BECAME THE FIRST **UNDISPUTED WORLD CHAMPION**.

HE WOULD LOSE THAT TITLE IN 1894 TO EMANUEL LASKER, WHO WAS 32 YEARS YOUNGER.

IN HIS 60s STEINITZ SUFFERED A COMPLETE MENTAL COLLAPSE AND WAS INSTITUTIONALIZED IN MOSCOW FOR 40 DAYS. DURING HIS CONFINEMENT HE INCESSANTLY CHALLENGED FELLOW PATIENTS TO GAMES OF CHESS; BY THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, THREE YEARS LATER, HE WAS BRAGGING ABOUT PLAYING CHESS WITH GOD OVER AN INVISIBLE TELEPHONE.



BOBBY FISCHER WAS ONLY 13 WHEN HE PLAYED HIS FAMOUS "GAME OF THE CENTURY" AT THE MARSHALL CHESS CLUB, DISPLAYING ONE OF THE MOST ELECTRIFYING QUEEN SACRIFICES IN HISTORY.

THE ENSUING YEARS WOULD SEE HIM GO FROM AMERICA'S COLD WAR HERO TO A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE: IN 1992 HE VIOLATED U.S. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IN ORDER TO COMPETE IN YUGOSLAVIA.

FISCHER BECAME A UNABOMBER-LIKE CHARACTER WHO **REMOVED HIS DENTAL WORK** TO FOIL SUSPECTED FBI SURVEILLANCE AND, FOLLOWING THE 9/11 ATTACKS, CALLED IN TO A PHILIPPINES RADIO STATION TO SAY:

FISCHER DIED IN 2008 AT THE AGE OF 64—POETICALLY LIVING A YEAR FOR EVERY SQUARE ON A CHESSBOARD.



THIS IS ALL WONDERFUL NEWS. IT'S TIME FOR THE FUCKING U.S. TO GET THEIR HEADS KICKED IN.

"BOY GENIUS" PROCLAIMED THE COVER OF THE DECEMBER 19, 1964 ISSUE OF THE SATURDAY EVENING POST. THE STORY'S SUBJECT WAS FIRST-GRADE MATHEMATICS PRODIGY **PETER WINSTON**, WHO AT THE TIME HAD NOT YET ENCOUNTERED A CHESSBOARD.



A DECADE LATER, AT THE U.S. JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS, WINSTON TIED FOR FIRST PLACE AGAINST FUTURE GRANDMASTER LARRY CHRISTIANSEN.

TWO YEARS LATER, WINSTON WAS REPORTEDLY DIAGNOSED AS SCHIZOPHRENIC; **THE MEDICATION HE WAS PRESCRIBED** SEVERELY HAMPERED HIS CHESS GAME.

IN EARLY 1978, WITHOUT I.D., MONEY OR EVEN A JACKET, 19-YEAR-OLD WINSTON WANDERED INTO ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS BLIZZARDS EVER TO STRIKE NEW YORK. FOUR DECADES LATER, HIS BODY HAS NOT BEEN RECOVERED.



AT THE AGE OF FOUR, FABIANO CARUANA MOVED FROM MIAMI TO BROOKLYN AND TOOK UP CHESS AT HIS SYNAGOGUE'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM, A MILE AWAY FROM WHERE FISCHER HAD LEARNED THE GAME IN HIS MOTHER'S APARTMENT.

STARTING WHEN HE WAS FIVE, CARUANA DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO CHESS, BECOMING THE YOUNGEST AMERICAN GRANDMASTER BY THE TIME HE WAS 14.



BACK IN 1988, NEW YORKER JOSH WAITZKIN WAS AN 11-YEAR-OLD CHESS PHENOMENON FREQUENTLY TOUTED AS THE NEXT BOBBY FISCHER. THE TOP PLAYER FOR HIS AGE IN AMERICA, HE BECAME ONE OF TWO KIDS TO EARN A DRAW AGAINST WORLD CHAMPION GARRY KASPAROV IN AN EXHIBITION GAME. IN HIS DEFENSE, **KASPAROV WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY BATTLING 58 OTHER YOUNG PLAYERS.** WAITZKIN DID NOT BECOME THE NEXT FISCHER AND ABANDONED COMPETITIVE CHESS BY THE CLOSE OF



THE 20TH CENTURY. HOWEVER, WAITZKIN'S FATHER WROTE A BOOK ABOUT THEIR FATHER-SON JOURNEY INTO THE CHESS WORLD.

SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER BECAME A BEST-SELLER AND THEN A CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED FILM.



WAITZKIN WOULD LATER FIND SUCCESS IN PUBLISHING AND AS A MARTIAL ARTIST, WINNING A WORLD TITLE IN TAI CHI PUSH HANDS—AND AVOIDING FISCHER'S DARK LEGACY.



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE FISCHER GAINED GLOBAL ATTENTION, A U.S. GRANDMASTER IS FIGHTING TO BECOME THE UNDISPUTED WORLD CHESS CHAMPION. CARUANA, CURRENTLY NUMBER TWO IN THE WORLD AND THE TOP AMERICAN GRANDMASTER, WILL PLAY FOR THE GAME'S MOST COVETED PRIZE AGAINST THE REIGNING WORLD CHAMPION, MAGNUS CARLSEN OF NORWAY, IN A 12-GAME MATCH IN LONDON IN NOVEMBER.

BEYOND THE SEVEN-FIGURE PURSE AND WORLD TITLE, CARUANA IS PERHAPS ALSO FIGHTING TO **BREAK FREE FROM THE LONG SHADOW** OF BOBBY FISCHER AND THE REST OF HIS TORMENTED FOREBEARS.





POLITICS

Changing the World With Your Wallet

The way we spend our money is a daily weapon for reform. Here, America's most renowned consumer advocate makes the case for direct citizen action

BY **RALPH NADER**

Speaking before college audiences, I often ask, “How many of you have never been to a McDonald’s or a Walmart?” No hands go up—except mine. I explain that I’ve never given my consumer dollars to McDonald’s because of its deadly menu of fat, sugar and salt that has increased youth obesity for two generations. I’ve similarly refused to give my money to Walmart because of its low wages and unfair competitive practices that crush small businesses.

If you’re concerned about the impact your money has on the world after it leaves your pocket, you need to define your consumer preferences. In an internet age it’s easy to research brands to see if you agree with their positions on political candidates and their stands on diversity and nondiscrimination. But rarely do enough consumers vote with their dollars to send a clear and convincing message to companies that need to change.

Why? First, it can be difficult. Wells Fargo, the regulation-resisting bank with about 5,800 branches, was finally exposed after two recent crimes: Over the course of 2016 and 2017 it was discovered that the financial institution had created up to 3.5 million fake accounts and made unnecessary auto-insurance purchases for more than 800,000 unknowing customers. The media reported the details of these crimes extensively. The bank had to pay millions of dollars in restitution and fines, regulators put a temporary moratorium on its capital expansion, and the bosses stepped down, ample pay packages in hand. But what the bank’s directors feared most was loss of customers and an enduring stock-price collapse. That didn’t happen—because as everybody knows, switching banks is complicated, inconvenient and time-consuming.

Second, consumers may have limited options. If you have a small income or live in a rural area with few if any alternatives to Walmart and Amazon, it’s difficult to leverage your consumer dollars for better business practices.

And then there are the subtler methods practiced by tech giants such as Facebook and Google. When a company gives you something

for free, you become the product. Information about your private life is central to the business model of these giant internet companies. You’re unlikely to simply say “I want out” of your social networks after learning that Facebook has shared your personal data with everyone who wants it anywhere in the world. But when you click “accept” on those encyclopedic terms and conditions, you lose control of your online privacy, and your data profile grows by the day.

Our government, heavily lobbied by Silicon Valley, will not require Facebook to provide an opt-in button. To opt out from Facebook and its ilk requires willpower. When news broke that the social network had allowed unsavory com-

Dollar power could advance our country’s moral strength.

panies to obtain information about tens of millions of its customers, hundreds of thousands of them closed their accounts. This protest hardly made a dent. Facebook still has more than 2 billion users worldwide, including more than half the U.S. population. But Mr. Zuckerberg definitely felt the cautionary tremors.

Another difficulty is presented by the right-wing and very politically active Koch brothers. Together they’re worth more than \$100 billion, mainly from giant oil, gas and chemical enterprises. They lobby for corporation-friendly judges and against even minimal taxation. But they have no recognizable logo or brand presence at the retail level.

What can you do? First, educate yourself. It’s easy to find out which companies belong to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or other trade associations that push for weaker environmental standards, higher drug prices, more tax escapes for big businesses or tort restrictions that weaken access to our courts by wrongfully

injured persons. This will expose companies with no visible consumer brand or identity.

Sleeping Giants is a Twitter account that informs advertisers of consumers’ disdain for companies or news sites that fail to oppose bigotry, racism, sexism and hate-mongering. This public outing of abusers has caused thousands of companies to cancel their advertising contracts for fear of being accused of supporting media outlets or personalities—such as Fox’s Bill O’Reilly—whose behavior contradicts customer values or corporate policies. This collateral pressure works (though at times, like all mass movements, it can go to extremes).

You can be a “pick and choose” consumer based on your political values without sacrificing a good deal. I know people who won’t buy gas from ExxonMobil because of the company’s long-standing cover-up of and resistance to regulations dealing with climate disinformation. Years ago, consumers troubled by Philip Morris’s control of congressional politicians and promotion of smoking refused to purchase products from the company’s food subsidiaries. And when it comes to environmental malefactors like the Koch brothers, consumers can penalize them—and help themselves and the planet at the same time—by practicing energy conservation. Solar panels and products made from renewable resources are good places to start.

However, it’s worth adding that consumers don’t have to open their wallets for corporations to change practices. Notice how many powerful executives were immediately dismissed after facing credible accusations of sexual harassment, assault and rape. Companies ranging from Fox News to Morgan Stanley couldn’t ignore the waves of condemnation from consumers, workers and citizen action groups. Reporting by the mass media helped accelerate the process.

Remember, consumer spending accounts for more than two thirds of our economy. Even a small portion of that dollar power could be used to advance our country’s health, safety and moral strength. Protest with your spending choices. ■

DRAWN

PLAYBOY PROUDLY PRESENTS

ILLUSTRATED BY TIMBA

NEW EDITION

NOV/
DEC
'18

SIGNIFICA, INSIGNIFICA,

STATS AND FACTS



GOBBLE GOBBLE

45 million

approximate number of turkeys dispatched for Thanksgiving dinner last year

Greetings FROM TURKEY TOWN USA

4

number of U.S. geographic locations (not including townships) with tryptophan-laced names

TURKEY CREEK, Arizona
TURKEY, Texas
TURKEY CREEK, Louisiana
TURKEY, North Carolina

FLOAT ON

12,000

cubic feet of helium needed to inflate one giant balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

90

maximum number of people needed to anchor it

Tipping POINT

1 in 10

millennials regularly leave no tip for servers; nearly 1 in 3 leave less than 15%.



PANTY PREFS

Top four most popular women's underwear colors:

- 4) PINK
- 3) GRAY
- 2) WHITE
- 1) BLACK

MYTH BUSTER

1988

year a scientist found two identical snow crystals, debunking the myth that no two snowflakes are exactly alike



FRIEND FILTERING



National Unfriend Day (NUD), on which NUD founder Jimmy Kimmel encourages Facebook users to REDUCE "FRIEND FAT" in an effort to reaffirm the value of IRL friendship

BYE-BYE BLACKBEARD

300:

years since the elusive pirate's death following a showdown with the Royal Navy off the shores of Ocracoke Island, North Carolina on November 18, 1718



Stop SUCKING

71,000+

pounds of plastic American Airlines says it will eliminate per year once the carrier bans plastic straws and drink stirrers from its cabins and lounges in November



NO STRAWS!
NO STIRRERS!



SANTA CELLS

1890

year Massachusetts businessman James Edgar became the first department-store Santa

Single SANTA

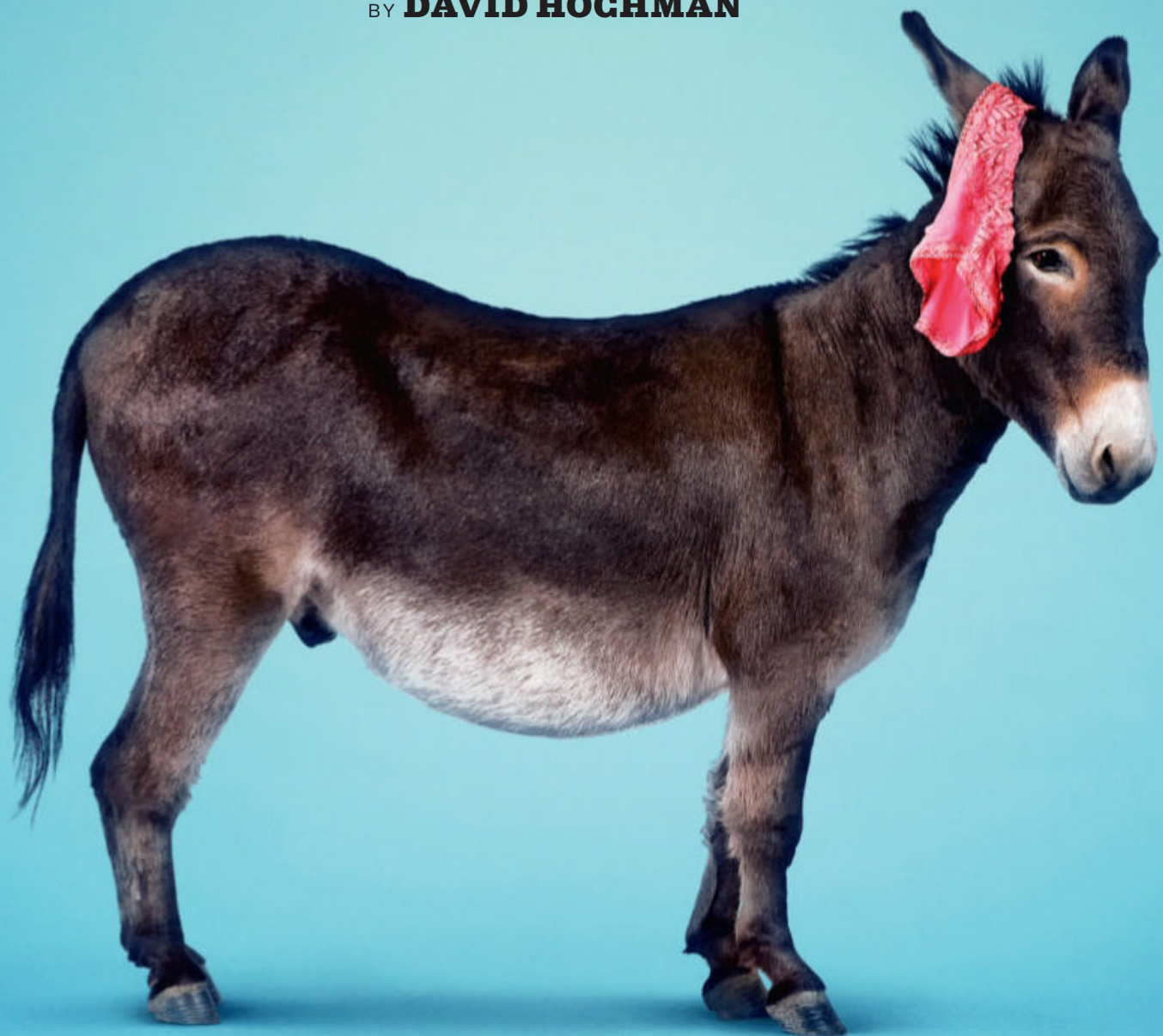
1849

first year Mrs. Claus was mentioned in print (in a short story by James Rees)



A VERY '80S SEX SCANDAL

BY **DAVID HOCHMAN**





MOVIES

*With **The Front Runner**, Jason Reitman and J.K. Simmons revisit the downfall of philandering presidential candidate Gary Hart. (Oh, how times have changed!)*

Director Jason Reitman knows that most of us have a way of misremembering history. We collectively believe Humphrey Bogart said “Play it again, Sam” in *Casablanca* (the line is “Play it, Sam”) and that the beloved ursine family is called the Berenstein Bears when it’s actually the *Berenstain* Bears. This is known as the Mandela effect, named after the persistent internet claims that African leader Nelson Mandela died in prison in the 1980s when in fact he lived until 2013.

We have committed the same historical mangling with 1988 Democratic presidential nominee Gary Hart, the subject of Reitman’s provocative new biopic, *The Front Runner*. It’s commonly accepted that a photo of former beauty-pageant winner Donna Rice sitting on Hart’s lap aboard the yacht *Monkey Business* forced the charismatic Colorado senator to cancel his White House run in May 1987. In fact, the *National Enquirer* published the picture weeks after the *Miami Herald* and *The Washington Post* had already exposed the married father of two as an adulterer.

That’s one reason 41-year-old Reitman, born in Canada to *Ghostbusters* director Ivan Reitman and actress Geneviève Deloir, thinks the story deserves another look. “Gary Hart is an almost perfect conversation piece in that he’s a reflection of the public,” says Reitman. “Hart forces you to ask, What flaws am I willing to put up with in my leaders? When are private matters a public concern? What information should we trust in making decisions about our candidates?”

A 2016 *Radiolab* podcast brought the story to Reitman’s attention; his film is based on the 2014 book *All the Truth Is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid* by journalist Matt Bai, who co-wrote the screenplay. *The Front Runner* stars Hugh Jackman as the well-coiffed politician and J.K. Simmons, Oscar winner and frequent Reitman collaborator, as Hart’s put-upon campaign chief. Rounding out the principal

cast are Sara Paxton as Rice (who now goes by Donna Rice Hughes) and Vera Farmiga as Lee Hart, Gary’s wife. The trio of recent projects on the subject and the caliber of the *Front Runner* cast suggest a growing desire to measure Hart’s era against our own.

Depending on your perspective, the scandal was the moment American politics either got real or rode off the rails. It was certainly the first time the sex life of a presidential candidate had come under public scrutiny, and one could argue it’s a forebear to current #MeToo coverage: a powerful man undone practically overnight by highly publicized accusations of sexual misconduct.

“Before Hart, it was all wink, wink, nudge, nudge, from LBJ and Kennedy on down,” says Simmons. “Thirty years later, you look at what presidents have been involved with in terms of their sexual peccadilloes, and suddenly, having a party on a boat or a lady visiting your condo seems quite tame in comparison to what has happened under the desk in the Oval Office.”

Few debate whether Hart was an ingenious statesman with the potential for greatness.

His views on national security all but predicted the 9/11 attacks, and he advocated early on for a shift in the U.S. economy from industry to digital technology. If Hart had avoided disgrace and made it to the White House, would his infidelity have made a difference in how he led the country? The question fascinates Reitman: “This is a story about human beings who are nuanced and complicated and flawed, and at the end of the day, that’s politics. When you elect someone, you elect a person with flaws, and that’s as true today as it ever was. We have the most flawed human being of all time in the presidency.”

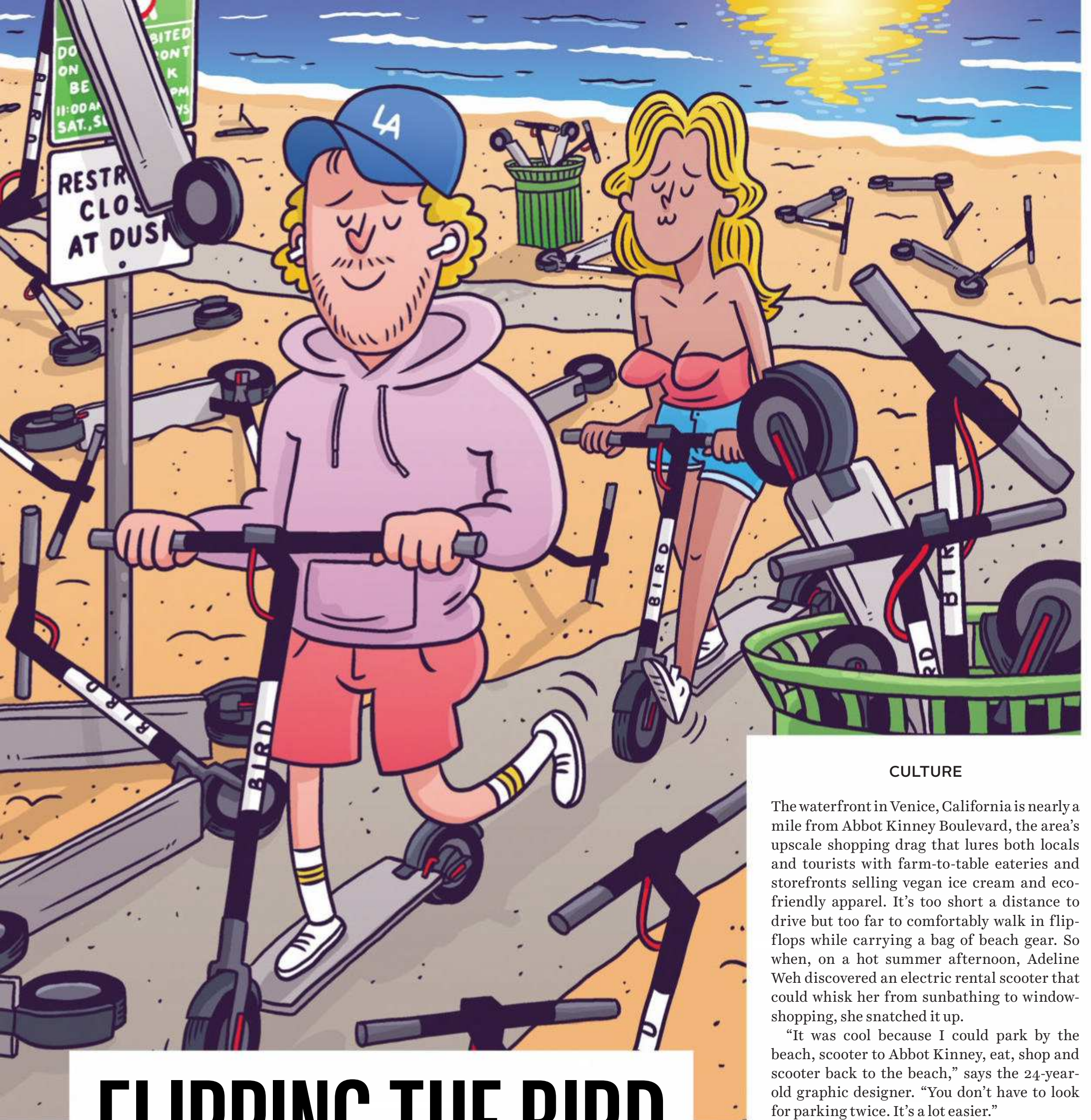
Having a set loaded with 1980s Americana—brick-size cell phones, velour tracksuits, Grand Wagoneers—helped conjure the zeitgeist. “The ephemera all brings a human connection to those days,” Reitman says. But the truest test of how *The Front Runner* holds up to the historical record came when Reitman showed the film to Donna Rice Hughes and the Harts (albeit at separate screenings).

“Donna was pleased to be portrayed as more than the blonde bimbo cheerleader so many people assumed she was,” Reitman says. Hughes graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of South Carolina; today she advocates for internet safety and protecting children online. As for Hart, he returned to law in 1988, earned a doctorate in politics from Oxford University and wrote several books. After many hard times and two separations, Gary and Lee recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Perhaps it’s no surprise that, of all Reitman’s subjects, it was Hart himself who stopped the director in his tracks.

“As you can imagine, showing Gary the film was the scariest screening experience of my life,” Reitman says. “We all went for hot chocolates afterward, and the first thing he asked was ‘Is that really how I talk?’ Lee looked at him and said, ‘Yes, Gary, that’s exactly how you talk.’ I started breathing again after that.” ■



Step on it: Hugh Jackman as Senator Hart.



FLIPPING THE BIRD

How e-scooters devolved from popular to problematic—and how they might find their way back

BY **JESSICA P. OGILVIE**

CULTURE

The waterfront in Venice, California is nearly a mile from Abbot Kinney Boulevard, the area's upscale shopping drag that lures both locals and tourists with farm-to-table eateries and storefronts selling vegan ice cream and eco-friendly apparel. It's too short a distance to drive but too far to comfortably walk in flip-flops while carrying a bag of beach gear. So when, on a hot summer afternoon, Adeline Weh discovered an electric rental scooter that could whisk her from sunbathing to window-shopping, she snatched it up.

"It was cool because I could park by the beach, scooter to Abbot Kinney, eat, shop and scooter back to the beach," says the 24-year-old graphic designer. "You don't have to look for parking twice. It's a lot easier."

Weh is one of millions of people nationwide who have embraced electric rental scooters over the past year. After appearing seemingly overnight on city sidewalks throughout the country in late 2017 and early 2018, the devices are now available in dozens of municipalities in the U.S. and abroad. Deployed by a handful of start-up tech companies, the e-scooters rent

ILLUSTRATION BY **LUKE MCGARRY**



for an average of \$1 to start the vehicle and an additional 15 cents per minute.

But in the short time they've been on the road, rental scooters, which are dockless (meaning they can be picked up and dropped off anywhere users want) and controlled by smartphone apps, have become lightning rods of controversy. Those who love them swear by their efficiency; those who hate them argue they're neighborhood nuisances. Meanwhile, city officials, many of them blindsided by the sudden invasion, are rushing to enact regulations as it becomes apparent that scooters, following the success of Uber and Lyft, will continue to disrupt the industry of short-distance urban transportation.

Dockless electric rental scooters first showed up in the U.S. in September 2017, when Bird Rides, Inc. dropped a fleet of the devices onto the sidewalks of Santa Monica, California. They were an instant hit—not surprising in a city that ranks as one of the most bike-friendly in the country. By February of this year, more than 40,000 people had used an e-scooter there, according to a report in *The Washington Post*. Other companies, including Lime-Bike, Spin, Jump and Skip, have since released fleets of their own. Some of these companies' founders were inspired by the dockless transportation systems in China that launched several years ago.

"China had the first inexpensive pedal bikes parked around the city that anyone can use, with the twist of being stationless," says Euwyn Poon, president of Spin, a San Francisco-based company that has scooter fleets in 19 American cities as of this writing.

Most companies claim their mission is altruistic: E-scooters reduce dependence on cars in already crowded cities, thereby decreasing pollution, traffic and car accidents. They also solve the so-called "first mile–last mile" problem, whereby commuters struggle to find a convenient way to cover the short distance to and from public transportation.

They're also a potential gold mine. In June, Bird raised \$300 million, led by Sequoia Capital, the same venture-capital firm that has backed 23andMe, Airbnb and Clutter. That financing gives Bird a valuation of \$2 billion and solidifies the e-scooter ecosystem as one of the hottest tech investments of next year.

"There's a kind of perfect storm," says Poon. "You have a product that has a clear market fit. It has great distribution. They naturally cause an immediate buzz, and they solve a big problem. It's an exciting space to be in."

As excited as early adopters may be, many city officials and residents have been far less

so. Few scooter companies coordinated with, or even informed, city officials before unleashing their fleets, opting for an "act now, ask for forgiveness later" approach. That's partly because most cities don't have ordinances on the books regulating such devices. Scooters can technically be left in the middle of sidewalks, in front of residences and on wheelchair ramps without legal repercussions. Users frequently ride without protective gear and pay no attention to where they're going, resulting in dozens of scooter-related injuries—including at least one fatality, in Dallas this past September.

It's these lapses, and the perceived arrogance of scooter executives, that have given rise to a national on-line NIMBY movement. Anti-scooter Instagram posts have popped up in droves. Accounts such as @birdgraveyard collect posts of individuals smashing, burning, submerging, tossing or otherwise vandalizing e-scooters. The account @scootersbehavingbadly documents rider misconduct, including "people riding recklessly, egregious parking jobs, accidents [and] various forms of protests against scooters," according to the account's administrator, who asked to remain anonymous.

At first, many officials moved to ban the devices, at least in the short term. In February, Los Angeles City Council member Mitchell Englander proposed a moratorium after a fleet of dockless vehicles placed at California State University in Northridge almost immediately started bleeding into neighboring areas.

"They were supposed to stay on campus, but there was no enforcement plan," he says. As a result, "they were wreaking havoc in the local community. Users were leaving them on private property, on people's lawns, blocking sidewalks, clogging streets. They were dropped in front of businesses' doorways and blocking entrances. My phone started ringing overnight." Santa Monica, Newport Beach and San Francisco have similarly banned e-scooters in the past year, albeit temporarily, so city officials could strategize and come up with an official response.

Englander's proposed legislation would have stopped distribution of the devices until a pilot program could be tested. "I love the idea of disruptive technology and the first mile–last mile connectivity that is missing here in Los Angeles," says Englander. "And I love the idea of having new technology and transport systems

employed—but within parameters and in a controlled environment."

Among the first companies to test parameters in advance of releasing their e-scooters is Spin. After working with officials in Coral Gables, Florida beginning in April 2018, the company now has an exclusive contract with the city. Coral Gables City Commissioner Vince Lago cites the collaboration as the reason the rollout has gone so smoothly.

"I decided to work with Spin so we could do it legally, without the typical rogue rollout," he says. "We haven't had one issue. They have been a hit."

Since then, cities including Austin, Louisville and Baltimore, all of which initially

"WE CANNOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO OUR CITIES HERE IN THE U.S."

prohibited scooter-rental companies from operating in their jurisdictions following random rollouts, have begun working with companies to allow them back on the streets, this time with regulations in place. Most limit the number of scooters each company can put on the street and the speed at which they can travel, and require that companies be responsible for picking them up.

In turn, a number of companies that executed surprise rollouts are backtracking. Earlier this year, Bird was nearly banned by the city of Santa Monica when officials voted to allow only a few such companies to operate within city limits. Bird CEO Travis VanderZanden released a public pledge on the company's website that states "we have all seen the results of out-of-control deployment in China.... We cannot let this happen to our cities here in the U.S." Bird promises not to increase its fleet unless the scooters are used an average of at least three times a day, to enforce pickup every night and to donate \$1 per vehicle per day to the city government.

Perhaps those rules will keep e-scooters on the streets and move us a little closer to the low-emission utopia their owners envision. For users like Weh, it's a future they would welcome. "I want to see them at every beach, near every beach. It really helps," she says. "I hope they stay around." ■



TRAVEL

FAR FROM

For one young adventurer, reconnecting with

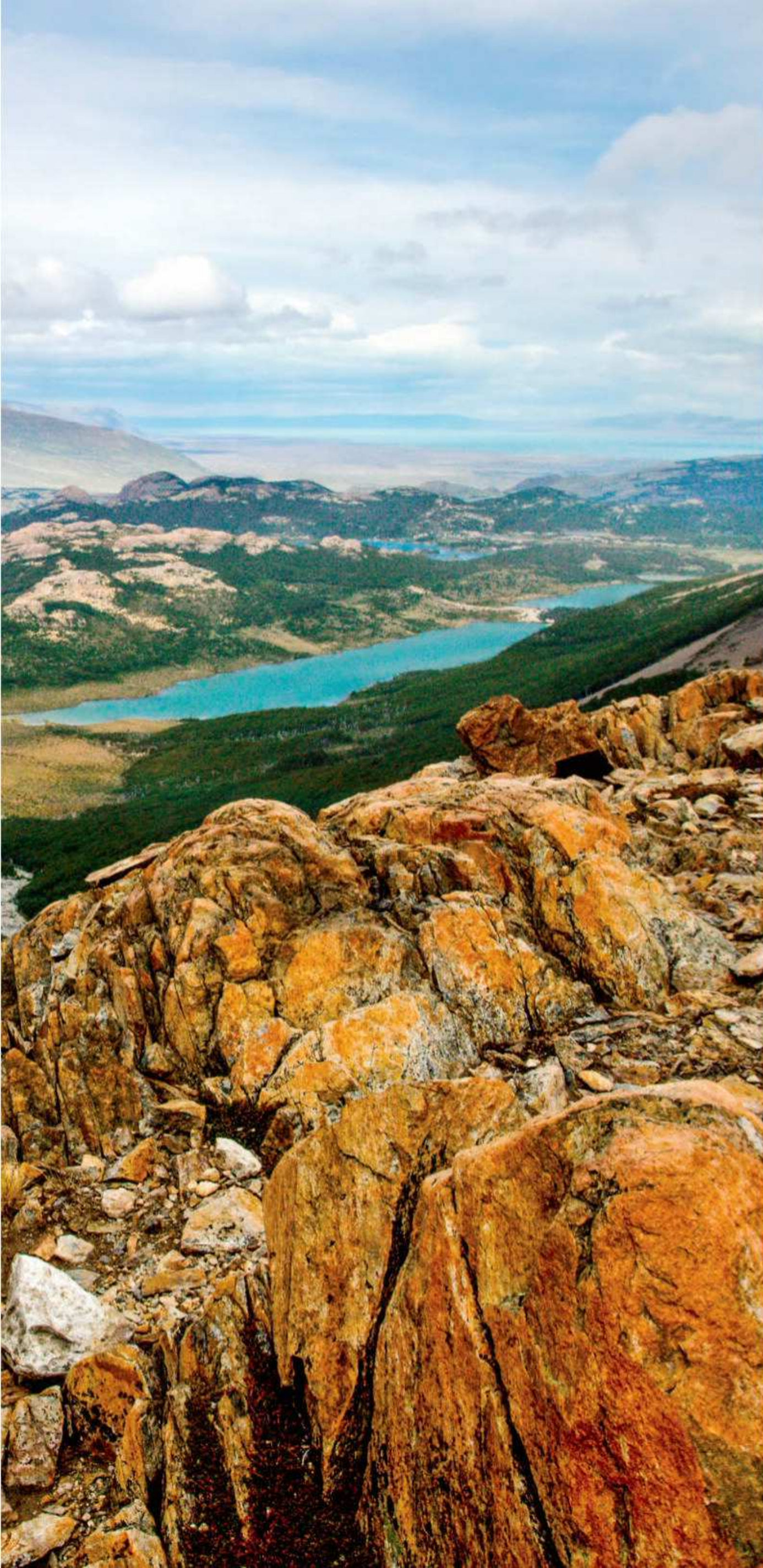
HOME

the spirit of the season was simple—it just took

FOR THE

a bicycle, two hemispheres and 7,000 miles

HOLIDAYS



Sitting outside a crusty hostel in Ecuador, smoking cigarettes with some Argentinean backpackers, I found that I couldn't locate the Big Dipper in the night sky. It was August 2014, and I was a year into a 16-month cycling journey from Oregon to Patagonia, the other side of the world from my hometown of Los Angeles.

BY **JEDIDIAH JENKINS**

I asked my companions to help me find the Dipper, and they in turn asked, "What is that?" I thought maybe South Americans called it something else, so I drew it on a napkin. They looked at me with confusion.

"I've never seen that," one of them said.

"But it's the most obvious constellation in the sky," I protested.

"No it's not. The Southern Cross is."

"What's the Southern Cross?"

Their expressions changed from confusion to shock. One of them grabbed another napkin and drew a kite shape with a rogue star in the upper right. He pointed up and there it was, as big and commanding as the Dipper. (I should add that the Big Dipper and the Southern Cross are asterisms, not constellations, but no one talks like that.) It was in this moment that it really landed on me: We live on a giant sphere, and where we stand on it affects what we see.

When I stargaze from my home in Los Angeles, I'm looking a specific direction into the universe—up, if you will. In the southern hemisphere, they're looking down. They've spent their lives gazing in another direction, at stars I'd never seen. Being away from the Big Dipper, as absurd as it sounds, left me feeling untethered. This anchor in the sky, a constant in my world, was not a guarantee. I had moved beyond its view. I had left it behind.

• • •

When my world is right-side up, I see October let go of all her leaves. Halloween hits, and then Thanksgiving is bubbling in the dining room, and when that epic meal is over we turn on the news to watch early-bird shoppers stampede into Best Buy. Then the holiday season is in full swing and every day is a bit colder. (Yes, I live in snowless Los Angeles, but when I think of the holidays I think of my childhood home of Nashville, where there's enough snow to conjure the appropriate Christmas nostalgia.) After the presents are opened, you have just a second to catch your breath before New Year's Day. And it's over. The year ends in an ever-accelerating slide.

The holiday season is a mixed bag. It can be terrible—an inescapable hell with the family who hurt you, or a painful reminder of a lack of family. If you're lucky, a swell of love and good cheer takes over, a feeling of the year's completion and the promise of renewal. I've been one of the lucky ones: For me, the holidays are about finding perfect gifts for my parents, lounging by the fire, taking forest walks and overeating.

What goes unnoticed is the stage on which it is all set: the hemisphere in which you happen to live. In the northern hemisphere, the year comes to a close in the winter. The shortening of the days. The chilled air. The first snow. The Christmas movies and songs full of wintry scenes. There's a necessary coziness that accompanies the cold: You have to huddle together, maybe with some good food. And maybe we all start singing a song everyone knows.



Previous pages: El Chaltén, Argentina. **Above:** Jenkins charts his course in San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina (left). His cycling rig on the outskirts of Futaleufú, Chile (middle and right).

November 2014 in Patagonia, however, was unlike anything I'd experienced before. I woke up on Thanksgiving in the tiny town of Puerto Río Tranquilo. It was warm outside; summer was coming. There were about three hostels and a cluster of maybe 30 houses. That's it. I was the only English speaker except for an Italian traveler who saw my bicycle and wanted to talk about the cyclist's life. But I wasn't having it. He didn't know it was Thanksgiving. No one did.

I was 6,000 miles from the United States, on the bottom of the planet, in a place that saw the fourth Thursday of November as any other day. The child inside me, expecting family and friends and a huge meal—and perhaps my mom saying “Go around the table and say what you're thankful for”—was all alone and sad. I had none of those things. And it wasn't even fall; it was bright green spring.

In an effort to create my own holiday cheer, I sat at the only café in town and wrote out everything I was thankful for in my journal. The list consisted almost entirely of the people in my life. Writing their names made them feel closer. With me. Then I had to pack up, strap my shit onto my bike yet again and cycle down the gravel road with not a soul by my side.

...

There was no Black Friday, no rush for Christmas presents; there was only gravel road. Instead of pillowy snow, there was grass, lush with flowers exploding with color.

As I rode south, approaching my final destination of El Chaltén, Argentina, I thought about the meaning of the holidays. December had accrued a number of traditions of my own devising: I would always make a playlist of old Christmas music, such as Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole and the *Charlie Brown Christmas* soundtrack. I would have people over for a potluck and show

off my compilation. We'd light the fire pit, hang in my backyard and wear out my list.

Then I would fly back to Nashville. The leafless world and brisk air greeted me. I could always depend on that one house to go all the way with giant inflated snowmen and Santa. I'd have a big Christmas with my mother and sibling before driving down to have a quiet one with my father. He is near impossible to shop for because he seems so content, so I'd just bring him a hug and my undivided attention. This constellation of memories and rituals created an expectation. A predictable comfort. An order in the universe. Everyone behaves in such a way in my usual wintry world, and I like it.

You know something best when it's taken from you. Cycling alone through the first week of December and then the second, my mind was knotted. The sky stayed light until 10 P.M. Snow was still thick on the top of the mountains, but the sun was scorching. There was the occasional Christmas decoration at a hostel, but otherwise it could have been April.

Of course, total immersion in a new setting is not an option in the age of Instagram. I knew very well what month it was and what was, traditionally, supposed to be happening in my life. I could see, in real time, friends and family decorating their homes and having Christmas parties. I was handed my old world in my phone, and then, on looking up, I was reminded of my incredible distance from it.

In the second week of December, as I neared El Chaltén and the end of my journey, I finished my day of biking next to a raging river. I pushed through some trees, found a soft splash of grass, set up my tent and went to bathe in the river. It was aqua blue, which I assumed meant it came directly from the mouth of a glacier. Upon touching it, I experienced a paralyzing cold. I

stripped down and dipped my body in the water, hopped out shouting to the sky, then lathered myself up and jumped back in.

As I dried my shivering body, I looked at the bank of the river and its billion white and gray polished stones. There, at my feet, was a piece of driftwood about the size of a shoe. Some kind of wood-eating worm had carved the most intricate maze into it—a perfectly spaced tangle of lines like the winding folds of a brain. And in that moment, I thought of my dad. He'll love this, I said to myself.

I wrapped it in a T-shirt and put it in my bag. I wanted it to embody the bigness and jagged beauty of Patagonia—a piece of wood from the bank of a river, unseen by anyone, grown from a tree neither he nor I would ever see. Maybe no human would ever see it, but it held all the Christmas I could gather for myself so far south. Night fell, and I looked past the trees above my tent to the sky above. A cloudless sky, the Southern Cross high and obvious above me.

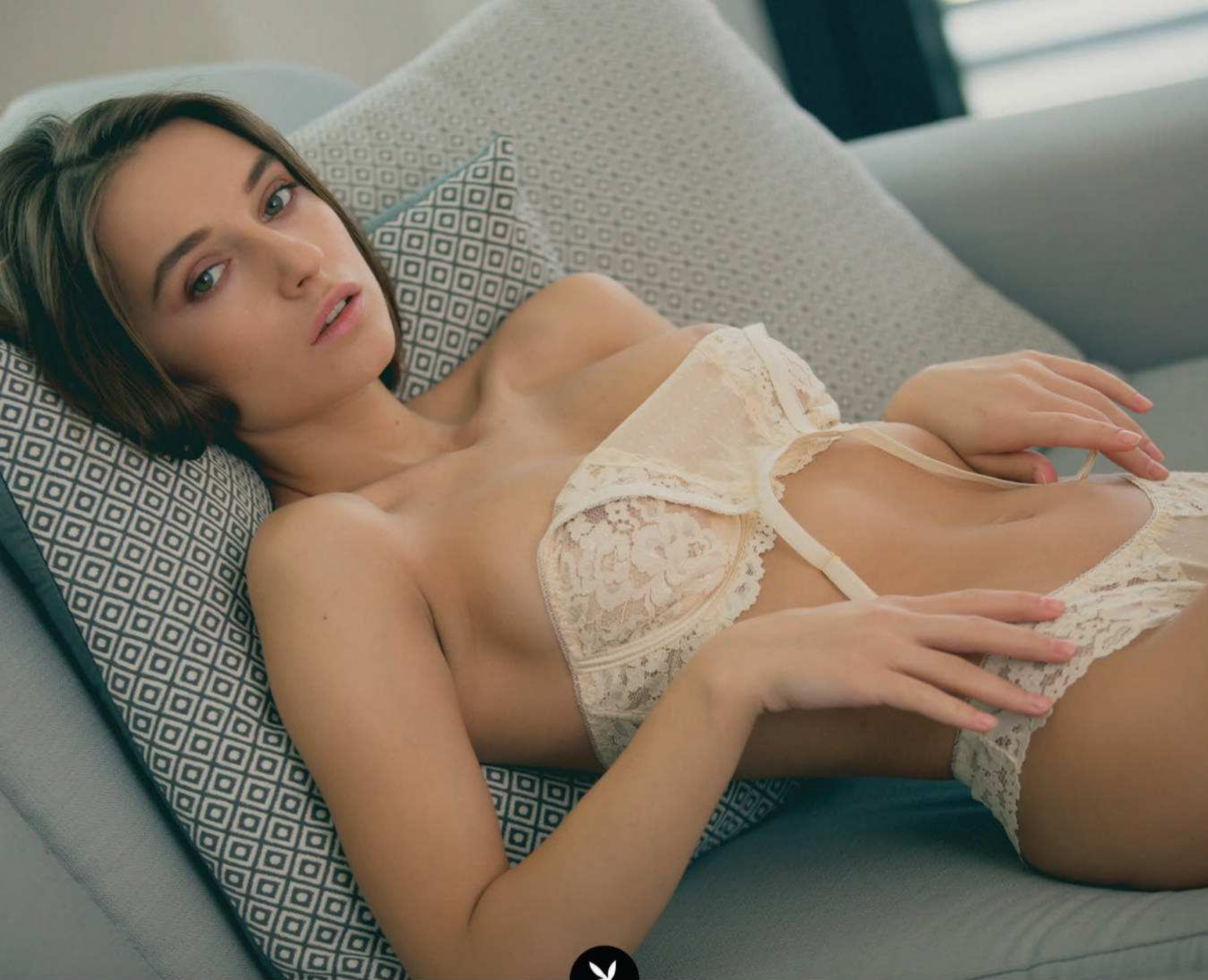
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The foreign stars, the summer air, had given me two gifts: a piece of wood for my father and a distant view of my holidays. I saw them for the first time.

On December 22, I flew home. As the plane dipped below the clouds above Nashville, I saw the familiar winter world I had yearned for. I was picked up from the airport, and when I got out of the car, the freezing cold hit my skin. Christmas, my kind of Christmas, was here.

That night I went outside into the night sky. And there it was, the Big Dipper, cartoonishly framed in another opening of trees, as if to say, “I never left. You did.”

*Jenkins's new memoir, *To Shake the Sleeping Self*, is available now from Convergent Books.*



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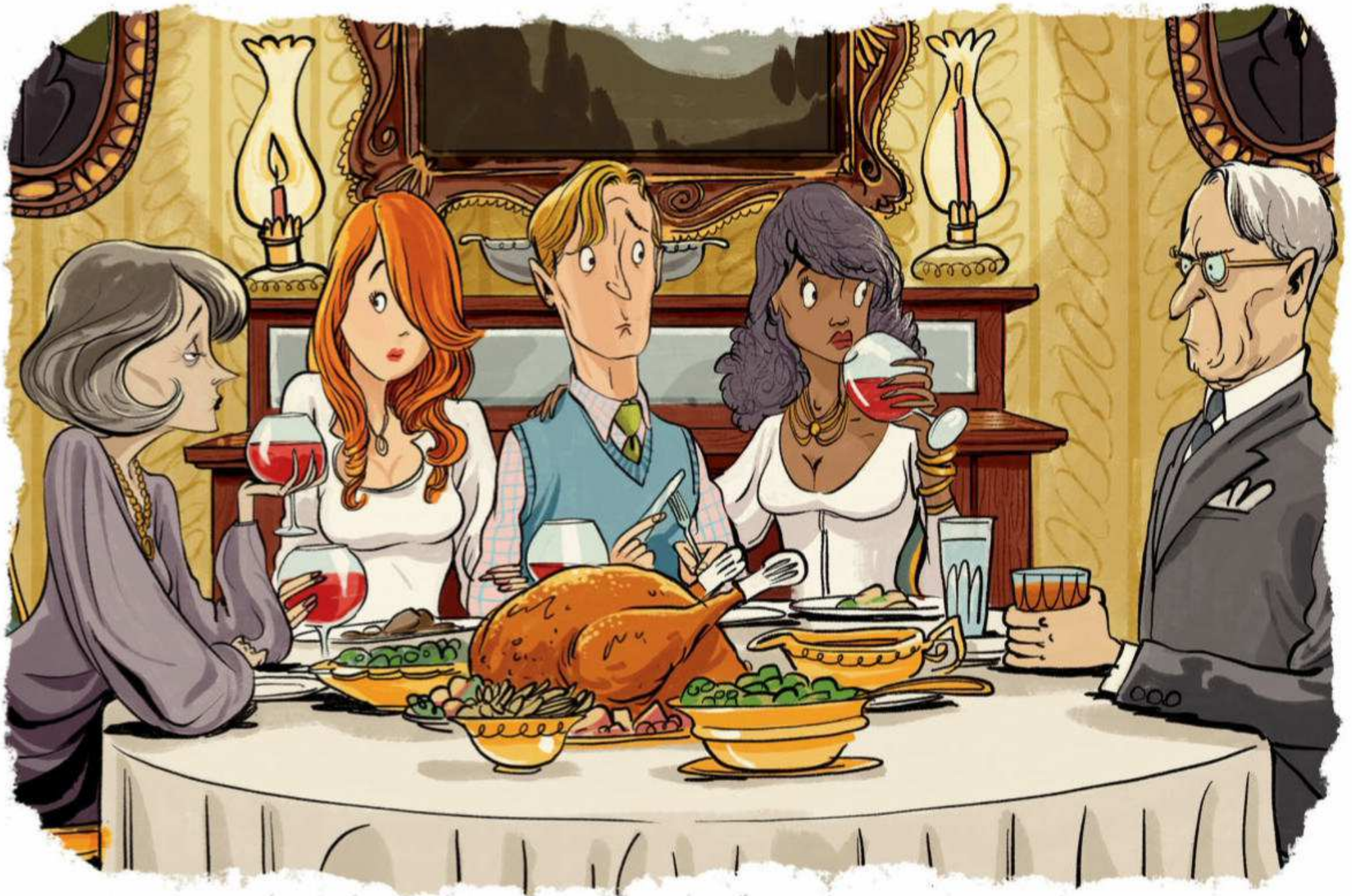
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Playboy Advisor

Sex columnist **Anna del Gaizo** coaches a man who wants to modernize the concept of bringing someone home for the holidays; plus, advice on role-playing, popping cherries and planting seeds



Q: *I'm in a polyamorous relationship with two women. This year will be the first time we're together for the holidays, but I have no game plan for introducing them to my relatives. I love both women and don't want to have to choose between them. Is this the right time to introduce my lifestyle to my family, or should I ask my lovers to decide?—C.O., Kenosha, Wisconsin*

ILLUSTRATION BY ZOHAR LAZAR



A: The holidays can be challenging to begin with. Between last-minute shopping, office parties and their accompanying hangovers, and familial obligations, the notion of adding not one but two significant others to the mix is enough to make most people skip the mistletoe and jet off to a remote locale until January 2. Props to you for wanting to make everyone happy during the year's most stressful season, but when we try to please everyone we often end up pleasing no one—particularly ourselves.

A festive family reunion is never the right time to deliver dramatic and potentially heart-breaking revelations. I'm of the attitude that people who judge what you do in your own bedroom should suck it, but I have to ask: How open-minded is your family?

If you truly deem this to be the ideal occasion to give your nearest and dearest the unexpected gift of two Santa babies on your arms, be prepared to explain to them everything polyamory encompasses: the capacity to be in love with more than one person at a time and the practice of consensual, ethical nonmonogamy. Also explain what it isn't. (You're not a recent Mormon convert, right?) Expect some ire from your less progressive relatives as they dig into the green bean casserole, and at least one crass joke from your drunken uncle. But first, are you certain both your lovers *want* to meet your family? They may have already made plans to spend the holidays with their own relatives—or with each other.

Q: *My boyfriend likes to role-play but not in the way you might imagine. When we're having sex he'll say things like "Tell me you want to be my wife. Tell me you want to have my baby." He never says anything similar outside the bedroom. I assume he gets off on "dirty talk" that suggests we're bonded for life. In reality I'm on birth control, so there's a fantasy element at play here. How seriously should I take his remarks about marriage while we're having sex? He's messing with my emotions.—R.G., Winnipeg, Canada*

A: Monogamy and procreation: How novel! This fantasy is tame—innocent, even—and based on an old-fashioned notion, which is what makes it subversive. It's so pure that it seems twisted. If these lofty sentiments were coming from the mouth of a man who *wasn't* your potential baby daddy, you could have some fun: Gush about the immortal union you're creating with your adoring husband-to-be; whisper every sweet nothing he coaxes out of your quivering lips.

Unfortunately, he's your actual boyfriend, so you have to take this relatively seriously. How

do you react in the moment? If your knee-jerk response has been to play along, moaning, "Oh yes, I want to be your wife! Let's make a baby!" it's safe to say he assumes you're into this scenario too. If you're stone-faced and tight-lipped, your boyfriend is more oblivious than most.

Which brings me to the real question: What do you want out of this relationship? If it's a proposal and two and a half kids, you must ask him, "What's the deal? Do you actually want to marry me, or is this just a fantasy?" A postcoital cuddle is as good a time as any to tell him what you've told me: He's messing with your emotions. Otherwise, it may be time to introduce some of your own surprise role-playing: Tell him your birth control failed and you're pregnant. Trust me, your answer will be in his reaction.

Q: *I've had a bukkake fantasy ever since I discovered porn. I want to act on it, but I'm completely clueless about how to find such an orgy or set one up. Any advice?—R.U., New Haven, Connecticut*

A: Ah, the polarizing practice of a group of men standing in a circle and masturbating until they all climax on a willing recipient who gleefully submits to load after load. Talk about being thirsty, right? Bukkake originated in the 1986 Japanese porn film *Mascot Note*; the word translates to "the act of splashing." Regarded as a fetish by most and a degrading practice by many, it remains a niche practice. While sex parties have infiltrated the mainstream, bukkake parties are still on the periphery, with a mere 4,300 videos on Pornhub in the bukkake category. (For reference, the porn site received more than 4 million total uploads last year.) Even so, there's no reason you shouldn't be able to find at least a few cohorts with the same zeal for collective coming—though you may have to travel a bit from New Haven.

Dive into online bukkake forums. (Many advise men to drink blackberry juice in advance to ensure their semen tastes sweet.) These hubs offer chat rooms for connecting with other semen enthusiasts. Research local swingers parties and consider attending a high-end sex party such as Killing Kittens, Snctm or NSFW, where you can meet potential attendees for a future event should you ever choose to host one. If you haven't already, get a facial from an eager partner. (All the better if he holds off on masturbating for three days ahead of time, which will result in a much larger load.) Then do the same in a threesome, which is easier to orchestrate than an orgy. Fantasies often deviate from reality. In the end, a second serving may be just enough to satisfy your sexual appetite.

Q: *When is it okay to start fucking someone without a condom? I've been dating a woman for two months. She's on the pill, and we've shown each other our STD test results—but she still won't engage in bareback sex. It's frustrating enough that I'm thinking of ending things.—G.M., Encino, California*

A: I empathize with your frustration, but I applaud you for taking the responsible route. If she's a rational person, she probably doesn't fear pregnancy. Rather, she may know that STD rates in the United States have reached record highs for the fourth consecutive year. Cases of gonorrhea increased 67 percent between 2013 and 2017, and cases of syphilis increased 76 percent over the same period.

So not wanting to go bareback may relate to whether she believes you're truly exclusive. Other possibilities: She has a condom fetish. She's a germophobe. She thinks the penis is gross and doesn't want it touching her vagina. None of these are common in my experience, but anything's possible. Ultimately, if she's not communicating what bothers her about bareback, it may be time to throw in the rubber.

Q: *I'm dating a 35-year-old virgin. He's a Christian and recognizes he has deep-seated issues because of his religious upbringing. I like him, but sex is really important to me. How do I do this?—R.S., Marengo, Illinois*

A: It's one thing to go without sex for a long time when you're single; it's another entirely when you're in a relationship, especially when dopamine is coursing through your brain. There's a lot to be said for getting to know someone—even falling in love—before getting into bed, and delayed gratification can make the eventual release all the more intense. But how delayed are we talking?

Like most cautious customers, I like to test-drive a car before buying. What if it doesn't ride smoothly or, worse, the stick shift is too small? Your concerns are natural. Sex should be important to everyone. You can have all the intellectual chemistry in the world, but if you don't know how to fuck each other, you're screwed.

But by all means, give him a chance. How often do we meet someone we really like? He seems to be comfortable opening up about his issues. If you fall for each other and you end up popping his cherry, you might find yourself having the most mind-blowing sex of your life.

Or not. You can't predict, so instead, decide how long you're willing to wait. In the meantime, treat yourself to a new dildo. Knowing you have one may be just the thing that finally gets him off.

Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.



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**PLAYBOY
INTERVIEW:**

TUCKER CARLSON

A candid conversation with Fox News's prime-time provocateur on his "moderate" views, media manipulation, Rachel Maddow, mortality and why identity politics annoy him so damn much

It's been almost a decade since Tucker Carlson stood in front of a crowd of conservatives and told them they should be doing a better job of telling the truth. It was February 2009, and Carlson, fresh from his canceled MSNBC debate show, *Tucker*, took the stage at the Conservative Political Action Conference and delivered a speech that stunned many in attendance. "If you create a news organization whose primary objective is not to deliver accurate news, you will fail," he said. He pointed to *The New York Times* as a competitor they should be emulating. "It's a paper that actually cares about accuracy," he said. "Conservatives need to build institutions that mirror those institutions." The audience booed him.

It was Carlson's equivalent of Bob Dylan going electric at Newport. He dared to be unpopular with his own crowd, explaining that

they, and by extension he, could do better. In that moment, it looked as if he was reinventing himself as a conservative champion of facts over punditry.

Whether he has fulfilled that promise depends on whom you ask. Less than a year after his infamous speech, he co-founded the conservative website The Daily Caller and was hired by Fox News, first as a contributor and eventually, in late 2016, as host of his own prime-time show, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, which has since become one of the network's ratings juggernauts. Next to Sean Hannity, Carlson is the face of Fox News and the target—and instigator—of seemingly endless controversy.

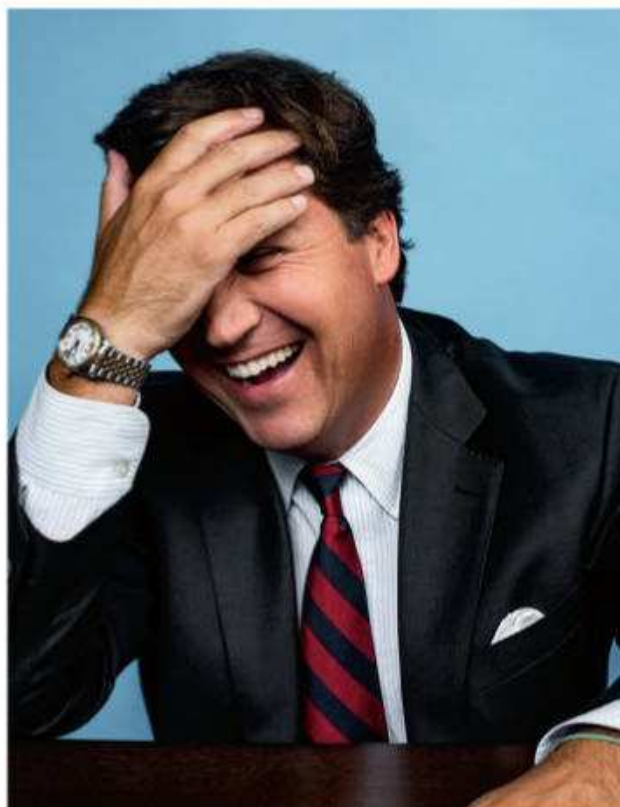
Over the past year alone, Carlson has managed to say so many divisive and antagonistic things it has been difficult to keep up. He has challenged diversity ("How, precisely, is diver-

sity our strength?"), accused Nike of trying to "destroy our society" with its Colin Kaepernick ads and questioned the need for feminism ("The patriarchy is gone. Women are winning. Men are failing"). He frequently says things that are downright jaw-dropping in their comical audacity. "I actually hate litter," he said in August, "which is one of the reasons I'm so against illegal immigration." In his worldview, colleges are "literally destroying the country," Mexico is a nation "controlled by the conquistadors," hate speech is a "made-up category designed to gut the First Amendment" and terrorism is a "largely immigrant phenomenon."

The anti-Carlson vitriol comes from both sides. He has been called "racist" by *The Washington Post*, "hate-filled" by *Esquire* (a former employer of his) and a perpetrator of "fringe shit" by *Family Guy* creator Seth MacFarlane.



"What's our job? Our job is to decide what's important and why. Fox has never, in the two years I've had the show, said, 'You can't do that.' I have pure editorial control."



"I don't think I'm an especially good person, but that's not what this is about. Aren't we supposed to be having a rational conversation about the best next move for the country?"



"I don't want to get into it because it sounds disingenuous, but I'm 49 years old and I don't think I've ever met a white supremacist. I've never met anyone who's like, 'I want a white ethno-state.'"

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **STEPHEN VOSS**



On the right, he has sparked outrage from former Fox News host Bob Beckel, who this summer tweeted, “What the f*ck has happened to you?” at Carlson. The network’s former military analyst and retired Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters has compared Carlson to a prostitute, and *Weekly Standard* co-founder Bill Kristol, who once called Carlson a “great young reporter,” asserted that his show represents a viewpoint “close now to racism.”

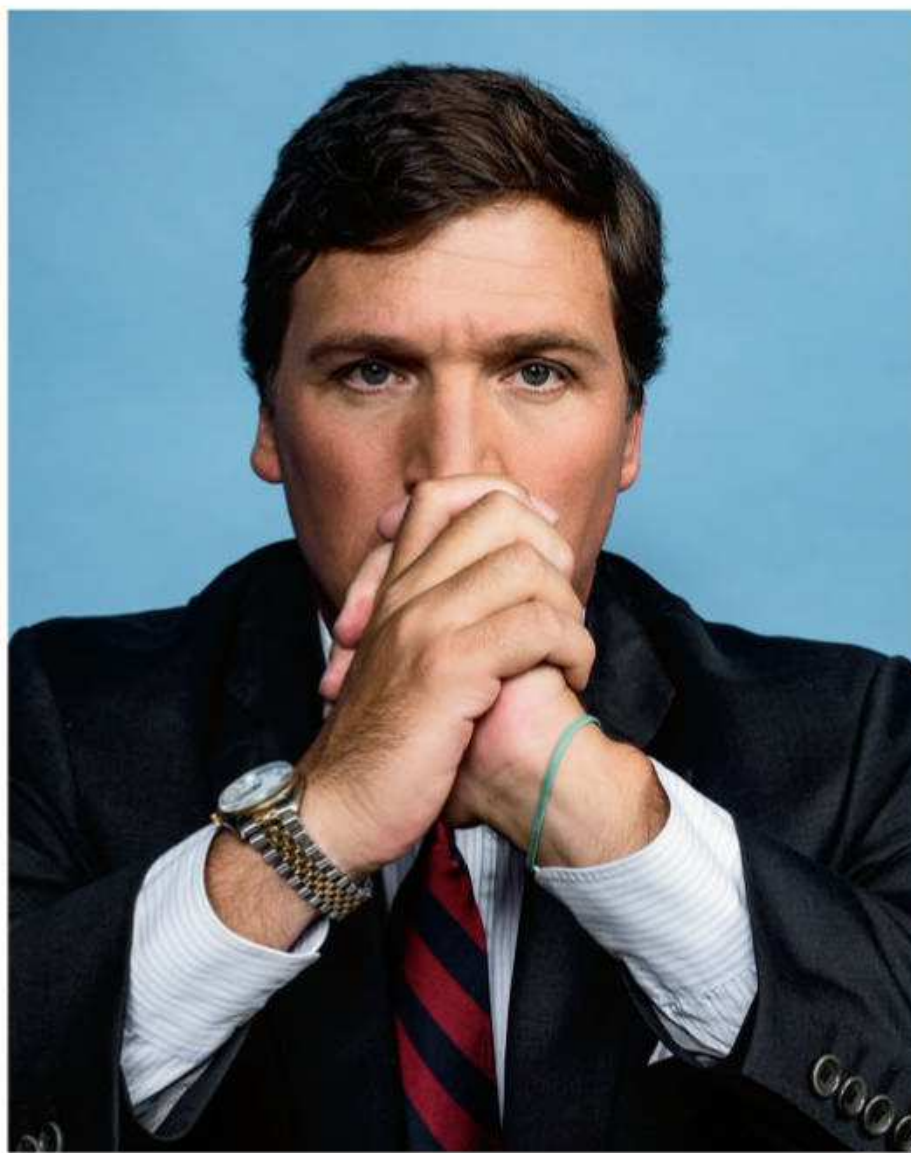
There was a time when becoming a great reporter was Carlson’s only aspiration. The son of Richard Carlson, an investigative journalist (among other jobs, including U.S. ambassador to the Seychelles), Tucker grew up in an affluent neighborhood in San Diego with a younger brother, Buckley. Their biological mother left when Tucker was just six, and his father remarried a few years later, to an heiress of the Swanson frozen-food empire.

Carlson tied the knot with his high school sweetheart and went on to become an acclaimed political writer in the 1990s, notably penning a 1999 *Talk* magazine profile of George W. Bush in which he describes the future president making jokes about a death-row inmate pleading for her life. (Bush denied Carlson’s account.) He dabbled in TV, making appearances on cable news but insisting he never took it seriously as a medium. He held off until 2000, when CNN hired him to co-host *The Spin Room* and then *Crossfire*, the latter program causing *The Daily Show* host Jon Stewart to accuse Carlson of “hurting America” in a standoff that now holds a place in the annals of television.

The late columnist Christopher Hitchens, an early admirer of Carlson’s writing, said in a 2007 interview, “I do remember telling Tucker I wish he wouldn’t give up writing for TV. And I hope he sometimes hears the distant, hollow echo of my voice. Tucker, don’t dooooo that.” Perhaps finally hearing Hitchens’s voice, Carlson has returned to writing with his new book, *Ship of Fools: How a Selfish Ruling Class Is Bringing America to the Brink of Revolution*, which takes on economic inequality, environmentalists, Facebook, the Clintons, feminists, First Amendment deniers and, of course, elites.

We sent Contributing Editor **Eric Spitznagel**, who last interviewed Michael Shannon for us, to meet with Carlson in Washington, D.C. He reports: “Conversing with Tucker is a weird dance. I kept wondering if I should be

challenging him more. But what good would come of that? Carlson’s entire job is defending his ideas, mostly by talking over anyone who disagrees with him. When I pushed back, his voice rose an octave—‘Of course I think that! Why wouldn’t I think that?’ he said at one point—and it felt like we were slipping into theater. I’d learn as much about Carlson this way as I would if I sat down with a classically trained actor, threw a Shakespeare script on the table and asked for a performance. So I focused on questions about who he is. We already know what he believes; what’s more interesting is how he got here.



“Carlson invited me to Fox News’s Washington, D.C. studio for a live taping of his show. I sat in a corner and watched him introduce segments such as ‘The Extreme Left’ and ‘Antifa Exposed,’ angrily making his case to an otherwise empty room. During commercial breaks he was all smiles, listening to the Grateful Dead—his favorite—and making wisecracks that had nothing to do with politics.

“A few hours earlier, Carlson and I had a pre-show lunch at Bistro Bis, one of his regular haunts, a few blocks from Capitol Hill. He was charming and gregarious, with a big laugh that filled the restaurant. He talked as though he were late for a bus: Every sentence out of his mouth was delivered with an ‘I’ve just got to

make this one more point before I go’ urgency. He ate stinky cheese—that’s the way he ordered it: ‘Give me a plate of your stinkiest cheese’—and laughed at how writing a book encourages the unhealthiest habits. ‘Give me another Twix bar,’ shouted the former smoker and current nicotine-gum enthusiast. ‘I’m on deadline!’ ”

PLAYBOY: How many packs of nicotine gum did it take to finish the new book?

CARLSON: Incalculable. I’ve been on lozenges as well as the gum.

PLAYBOY: What’s the difference?

CARLSON: [*Reaches into pocket and empties several packages of gum and lozenges onto the table*] You can’t use the lozenges on television because you get white foam around your mouth, and they tend to make your voice hoarse. But the beauty of the lozenge is it’s an extremely efficient means of delivery. If it’s a two-milligram lozenge, you’re definitely getting two milligrams. None of it’s escaping.

PLAYBOY: Do you have a pack of cigarettes stashed somewhere, in case of emergency?

CARLSON: I have one in my office. It’s a pack of Dunhills, given to me by Hunter S. Thompson just a few weeks before he died. I had this long, amazing dinner with him and Sean Penn in a restaurant in New Orleans.

PLAYBOY: It’s hard to imagine you dining with Hunter Thompson, much less Sean Penn. Isn’t Penn, you know, super liberal?

CARLSON: Believe it or not, I actually like Sean Penn. He’s interesting. He smoked quite a few that night. He’s going to wind up in the emphysema ward, that guy. Anyway, Hunter was wearing a medallion, almost like an Al Sharpton medallion. He didn’t talk a lot at

dinner, but when I got up from the table to leave, he hugged me so hard the medallion pressed into me and really hurt. Then he gave me the Dunhills and stared at me intensely. I knew he was going to die.

PLAYBOY: Come on.

CARLSON: I did! I could just tell. It was bizarre. There was only one cigarette in the pack, and I still have it today. Obviously I’d never smoke it.

PLAYBOY: Under what circumstances would you start smoking again?

CARLSON: I had a cigarette on election night back in 2016. I bummed one off of one of Megyn Kelly’s producers at, like, one in the morning. We were all at headquarters on Sixth Avenue and there was all this drama going on, all this



tension on the set. It was just one of those moments when you need to step outside for a minute. It was a Camel Light, and I took the filter off. It didn't taste very good, honestly.

PLAYBOY: The election may have been shocking enough to make you smoke, but what do you make of Trump today?

CARLSON: Trump is the greatest thing ever, because he short-circuits people's brains and they become all brainstem: "Whatever Trump is for, I'm against!" The reason I think I do a pretty good show is because I'm the only person in America who's not that interested in Trump. My book that just came out I think mentions Trump three times. I know Trump well. I think he has good qualities and bad qualities. I think he's funny, I think he's pretty brave, I think he's got good instincts, I think he's disorganized, I think he's got terrible taste in staff. There are a lot of problems with Trump. But in the end, I don't think he's the most compelling figure in world history. What's more interesting is why people would elect Trump.

PLAYBOY: Has there been an explanation you agree with?

CARLSON: The explanations we've been force-fed by everybody are so dumb, they're clearly a cover for the truth. "All his supporters are racist!"—that kind of thing. Of course it's nonsense. The real reason is because the fundamentals in the country are completely out of whack.

PLAYBOY: How are they out of whack?

CARLSON: Markets are supposed to reflect productivity and profits, right? I made this much last year, and on the basis of that metric, you decide how much my company is worth. That's just basic economics, and it has been discarded completely in favor of the Amazon model, based on promises and "I've got a good story to tell." The root of it is Fed policy. It's the federal government, under President Obama, deciding to avoid economic reality by flooding the system with cheap dollars. The long-term effect is obviously economic collapse, but in the short term it dramatically exacerbates economic inequality, so only people above a certain threshold can participate in the bounty. In other words, it makes a small number incredibly rich.

PLAYBOY: And the middle class disappears.

CARLSON: Exactly! That is the pivotal disaster of the past 10 years, which is never commented on. It's all like, "You're a racist!" Okay, fine. But do you notice that rich people are richer than they've ever been and everybody else is stagnating? Maybe that's the root of our political volatility. Maybe economics plays a role.

PLAYBOY: Do you think the U.S. is getting a class system?

CARLSON: We've always had a class system, because every society is hierarchical. But our class system has always been permeable; it was designed to be. People can fall out of the

upper echelons; inherited-money people often do, thanks to alcohol and cocaine. Smart, enterprising people can, of course, ascend. That's the American dream, right? Well, that has changed. The story of the last generation is that in 2015 the country stopped being a majority middle-class country. And no one even noticed. That's not a story compared to *racism*.

PLAYBOY: But both stories can be simultaneously important, right? There actually is racism in the world, in our own country. You're not denying that, are you?

CARLSON: Of course not. But this is actually the story. The only way you have a democracy is with a middle-class majority. Otherwise you become, what, Venezuela? You can't have a political system that gives every person a vote in a country where the economy excludes the majority. Because the majority will bite back. And how will they do that? It's always the same way: through populism. Either it's left-wing

The bottom line is the middle class is dying. That makes the country volatile.

populism—Cuba, Chavez—really left-wing populism—Lenin—or it's Donald Trump.

PLAYBOY: The pendulum could swing in either direction?

CARLSON: Exactly. It's the revolt of people who are economically disenfranchised but politically enfranchised. If you're going to have a lopsided society, with rich and poor, like in Latin America, you can't have a democracy. What you have is an oligarchy. We have a country where a small number of people are getting richer than any group has ever become in human history. Needless to say, they're covering their tracks. Why wouldn't they encourage greater racial conflicts, which they're doing, and make everything about identity? What faster way to divert attention from their own crimes, misdeeds and bad decisions than that?

PLAYBOY: Are you optimistic about the fu—

CARLSON: No.

PLAYBOY: We couldn't even get it out.

CARLSON: Because you have to solve for that. It's not about all this other stuff, which is so

dumb. My great frustration is the level of analysis. Because that's what I do; I'm in the analysis business. It's not that people disagree with me. That's fine. What's not okay is having the wrong conversation, or intentionally misdirecting from what matters to things that are irrelevant, which is 99 percent of what we talk about. The bottom line is the middle class is dying. That makes the country politically volatile, and volatility destroys what you want. What you want are stable, happy institutions run by stable, happy people. Volatility gives you the opposite. It destroys institutions and makes everyone crazy. Where does that volatility come from? It comes from economic inequality. That's the story. And no one is thinking about how to fix it.

PLAYBOY: Is it true you start your day by reading the newspaper obituaries?

CARLSON: Every morning.

PLAYBOY: Isn't that a bit morbid?

CARLSON: Not at all. People who brood about death are the happiest people.

PLAYBOY: How so?

CARLSON: Because they've acknowledged reality and have come to terms with it. I grew up in southern California, in La Jolla, which was this weird little affluent community where you could literally do or say anything. It was culturally liberal in the deepest sense. If you wanted to run off with your stepsister or join the circus, no one was going to judge you. The only thing you weren't allowed to acknowledge was death. Nobody ever died in La Jolla. That was verboten. There were no funerals. People just got in their black Mercedes-Benz, drove to Palm Desert and were never heard from again. You weren't allowed to mention death because it suggested we're not in control of everything. "He's

dead? Really? But he didn't smoke. He ate sensibly. I saw him eating avocados last week. He can't be dead."

PLAYBOY: Do you enjoy funerals?

CARLSON: I don't enjoy them, but I believe in rituals. I never miss a funeral. Or a baptism or a wedding. I go to every wedding, whether I'm invited or not.

PLAYBOY: You crash weddings?

CARLSON: I went to a wedding recently that I wasn't invited to. It was an old friend of mine, and I ran into his brother at the gym. He was like, "My brother is getting married next weekend." I was like, "Really? Nobody invited me." He said, "Oh, it's a small family thing." I said, "When is it?" He said, "It's in Atlanta next Saturday at four." I flew from D.C. to Atlanta, took a cab to the wedding, sat in the church for the ceremony and then came home.

PLAYBOY: You didn't stay for the reception?

CARLSON: No, that would've been weird. I wasn't invited.

PLAYBOY: Does reading obituaries feel like a



form of ritual, acknowledging the end of someone's life, even if you never knew them?

CARLSON: Yes. It's respect due to a person who has passed, but it's also a mini-biography. They tend to be nonpolitical, which I appreciate. I can't handle sneaky editorializing right when I wake up, because I'm too sensitive. I want a story like "He died, and here's what he did." It's usually stuff like "The guy who developed the eye test chart died." It's an acknowledgement that your time is limited. You don't have forever. And that's the sweetness of it.

PLAYBOY: You had a near-death experience with a plane crash, right?

CARLSON: Yeah. It totally changed my life.

PLAYBOY: What happened?

CARLSON: This was mid-October 2001. I'd gone to Pakistan for *New York* magazine to cover the Taliban. I was flying from Islamabad to Peshawar, on the Afghan border, to Dubai. It was right after 9/11, so everyone was paranoid about air travel. I was sitting in first class on a big Airbus, and everyone was chain-smoking Marlboros. There were clouds of cigarette smoke, but no alcohol was allowed. We stop in Peshawar, and all these randoms file in and sit on the floor of the cockpit and smoke cigarettes. It made me nervous. This was not a First World thing to do. So we took off again, and because of the bombings in Afghanistan, we had to fly the long way around, over Iran. It ended up being a four-hour flight. Around two in the morning, we're starting to descend. All of a sudden, *bam*, the plane just stops.

PLAYBOY: Midair?

CARLSON: It felt like we'd hit a building. And then the plane starts to drop. The engines rev and the plane turns sideways. It's clear we're crashing, no doubt about it. People are screaming. We finally touch down and bounce right off the runway. The right wing snaps off and all these sparks are coming up. Everyone knows we're going to die.

PLAYBOY: Were you thinking, I should have lived my life differently?

CARLSON: Yes, that's exactly what goes through my mind. I'm also thinking about all the ways I've been unfair to other people. You'd think in the face of imminent death you'd be like, This is happening, it's inevitable, and I'm peaceful about it. I was not peaceful at all. So the plane goes into a sand dune and ends up on its side. I was the first person off. I kicked open the door, the slide came down, I ran into the darkness and immediately got picked up by guards. I was brought to a room, locked in there and then put on a British Airways flight eight hours later. It was totally bizarre.

PLAYBOY: Did you ever find out what happened to the plane?

CARLSON: Not immediately, but five years later, a friend of mine was having dinner with one of the directors of Airbus in London and asked about the flight. He said they believed there was an explosive device in the cargo hold. I have no idea if that's true.

PLAYBOY: Are you still traumatized by it?

CARLSON: Not anymore, but I was at the time. A year after it happened, I quit drinking and my wife and I had another child. We had three kids already, but both my wife and I, independently, were like, "We're having another kid."

PLAYBOY: Does it still make you skittish to get on a plane?

CARLSON: No. It makes me a total fatalist. Before that happened, I was totally convinced that the safety of any flight depended on the intensity of my hopes. Now I understand I have no control over anything.

PLAYBOY: Not just whether you die on a plane?

CARLSON: I control nothing! Or almost nothing.

***First of all,
I'm not a
debater. That's
not how I think
of it. I don't
need to win.***

ing. I can control what I say on TV, and I can control how I treat my wife and children. But I can't control anything else. The second you realize that, the anxiety falls away. I could get hit by a car walking out of this restaurant. I'm not saying that in a sad way; I'm saying that in a happy way. It takes a lot off the table. All of a sudden, I didn't care about a lot of things I used to care about. I've been in a pretty good mood since.

PLAYBOY: Your other near-death experience was getting ousted by CNN.

CARLSON: It happened here, in this restaurant, in that booth right over there. Actually, I never got fired by CNN. I just lost my show.

PLAYBOY: Did you see it coming?

CARLSON: I had no idea. I never say this, because it sounds like sour grapes, but I wanted to get out of *Crossfire*. I got an offer from Rick Kaplan [then president] at MSNBC, who was trying to make MSNBC into a rival for Fox News. The offer was more than twice what I was making at CNN. So I called Jon Klein,

who was then the president at CNN, and said, "I'm leaving." He said, "Godspeed." I went to lunch, and when I got back, I had like 27 messages from journalists, asking "Can we get your statement on your firing?" CNN issued a statement saying I'd been canned. I've never been that shocked in my life. I called Klein immediately and said, "Do I have this right? The official story of CNN is that I've been fired?" He told me, and I quote, "It's business."

PLAYBOY: Like a character in *The Godfather*?

CARLSON: Exactly. A few years ago I was sitting on a plane, having just landed, and the first story I pulled up on my phone was "Jon Klein fired from CNN." I'd made this commitment to myself that when he got fired—and I always knew he would—I would call him and say, "I know everyone is calling with their condolences, but I want to do the opposite and say how pleased I am that you're fired. I hope this leads to years of suffering, because it's well deserved."

PLAYBOY: Did you do it?

CARLSON: I called him and he picked up, but there was this voice in my head that said, "Don't do that." So I hung up. I never said anything to him, even though he deserved it.

PLAYBOY: In your first book, *Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites*, you write that a question you're often asked by liberals is "You don't really believe all that, do you?"

CARLSON: All the time. I got that last week: "You're too smart." Really? I'm live five hours a week. If you're phony, people know instantly. It reveals who you really are.

PLAYBOY: Is that just you or everyone on cable news?

CARLSON: All of them. This is the opposite of what everyone wants to think, but most people in cable news, even

those I despise—and there are a lot of those—are exactly what you think they're like.

PLAYBOY: Do you tell your guests, "I'm going to come after you hard; get ready?"

CARLSON: I don't typically talk to guests beforehand. Sometimes our booker tells me there's a guest who wants to come on, but he's nervous. He thinks I'm going to pull a fast one or that I'm a mean person or alt-right or whatever. I always say, "Give me their cell and I'll call them." If they want to know, I'll tell them exactly what I'm going to ask. I never lie. I'll say, "These are the three questions I'm going to ask you, in this order."

PLAYBOY: What about your interview with *Teen Vogue* writer Lauren Duca? You were talking about whether Ivanka Trump is accountable for her dad's presidency, and Duca looked frustrated when you asked her about something she'd written about Ariana Grande. You ended that segment by telling her to "stick to the thigh-high boots."





CARLSON: Well, I was shell-shocked. This woman said things I didn't agree with, but I didn't think I was going to have a contentious argument with her. She made me so mad because she was so unreasonable, which made me unreasonable, and I snapped at her. That had the consequence—unintended, I can promise you—of making her famous. And then she got a college commencement address as a response to that, which was moronic. I watched the address. She's dumber than I thought.

PLAYBOY: So you're not bitter.

CARLSON: [Laughs] Listen, I should never have had her on or been mean to her. At this point it's just stupid that it ever happened, and I'm never mentioning this person again. In general, though, the thing people always say is "You're just a great debater." First of all, I'm not a debater. That's not how I think of it. I host a show every night. I don't need to win.

PLAYBOY: It can seem like you need to win.

CARLSON: I don't need to!

PLAYBOY: If it's not a debate, what is it?

CARLSON: I view it as a way of clarifying what's actually going on. And by the way, I fall short of that a lot. But that's my ideal. And listen, I've had many people on who, even if I didn't agree with them—well, here's an example. I interviewed this vegan whose view is you should never eat meat. For me, that's pretty easy: sad little vegan guy I can make fun of. So I tell him, "How dare you tell me what to eat! Why is that your business? Maybe I want to live on the Butterfingers diet. I have before."

PLAYBOY: How did that work out for you?

CARLSON: Not well; that's why I'm not on it anymore. Anyway, the vegan tells me, "I see what you mean, but the world champion weight-lifter right now is a vegan. I never tell anybody what to eat. I'm just telling you this works and here's why." I actually said to the guy on air, "I was going to be mean to you, but I kind of agree with this."

PLAYBOY: What makes you irate with a guest?

CARLSON: What makes me combative is when we start having a theological conversation. Eighty percent of my left-of-center guests want to take a political conversation and make it theological. It's not about what's best for the country; it's who's going to heaven and who's going to hell.

PLAYBOY: You're talking about liberals?

CARLSON: It's the argument of "I'm a good person." Immigration is a perfect example. It's clear that the beneficiaries of mass low-wage immigration are rich people, because guess who washes our underwear. We have a whole new servant class we don't need to feel guilty about because they don't speak our language and we're their saviors. The foreign-

born worker isn't going to complain about minimum wage, especially if he's illegal. He's too grateful. By the way, this isn't an attack on immigrants. They're really impressive, a lot of them. I'm just worried about the effect on native-born Americans, who are the people to whom our leaders have an obligation. So I'll make that point, and I don't think that's a right-wing point at all.

PLAYBOY: Immigrants taking jobs from native-born Americans isn't a right-wing point?

CARLSON: It's not. In fact, it's the point of organized labor. César Chávez made that point. This is what labor leaders have said for a hundred years. They opposed immigration for this reason. I think it's totally defensible. You may disagree, but let's talk about why. The response, 99 percent of the time, is "The Statue of Liberty demands that we do this and you're immoral and a racist if you don't." I'm sorry,

I like Rachel Maddow. She's an ideologue. That's not an attack on her at all.

I'm not talking about my soul and whether I'm a good person or not. I don't think I'm an especially good person, but that's not what this is about. Aren't we supposed to be having a rational conversation about the best next move for the country?

PLAYBOY: Did growing up near the border shape your views on immigration?

CARLSON: Because I grew up surrounded by Mexicans and they were all rich?

PLAYBOY: You knew only rich Mexicans?

CARLSON: It was a totally different dynamic. These days, when we talk about Mexicans, it's like everybody is a starving *campesino* from Oaxaca. In real life, it's a diverse country with a stratified class system and a lot of complexity. There's a lot of racial tension within Mexico, and a lot of shades of gray. In my world as a child, a Mexican man was someone with a house in Switzerland. It was a big-time destination for ruling-class Mexicans. It's a lot more complicated than we pretend it is.

PLAYBOY: Does it bother you when a neo-Nazi

website like the Daily Stormer calls you "literally our greatest ally"?

CARLSON: I don't want to get into it, because it sounds disingenuous, but I'm 49 years old and I don't think I've ever met a white supremacist. I've been to every state at least twice. I've traveled a lot and talked to everyone. I talk to every Uber driver and every bartender and every lady dropping off the dry cleaning. I talk to everybody all the time. I've never met anyone who's like, "I want a white ethno-state."

PLAYBOY: Are you saying you don't think white supremacists exist?

CARLSON: No. I don't doubt they exist. But the idea that white nationalism is a mainstream position is just absurd. I'm sure there are people who will defend North Korea. I had one on my show. But let's be real: Neither that nor white nationalism is a relevant position to the current debate. I don't think I'm an extremist.

I'm pretty moderate by temperament.

PLAYBOY: You consider yourself a moderate?

CARLSON: I do. But I feel I'm way out where no one else is because I see this as an economic crisis and nobody else seems to. Actually, that's not true. You know who else does? Some people on the way-out left.

PLAYBOY: Such as?

CARLSON: I don't want to say, because I don't want to admit that I talk to them. But if you were to go through my texts, which you're not allowed to do, you would be shocked by the number of hard-left people on my text exchange.

PLAYBOY: You're texting with Bernie Sanders? Paul Krugman? Jon Stewart?

CARLSON: [Laughs] God no! Let's just say there's a lot my hard-left friends and I don't agree on. I'm adamantly against abortion. I think I'm the only one on

television who ever talks about it. I'm definitely the only Episcopalian who feels that way. But there are things we agree on. For example, they're not interested in the identity-politics crap, because it's stupid. It's for children. It's also a dead end. Where do you think that winds up? My tribe is better than your tribe? We get Tutsis and Hutus, that's where that goes.

PLAYBOY: What do you know about your audience? Are they hard right, somewhere in the middle or something else?

CARLSON: It's hard to know. My sense is.... [pauses] I don't know. A lot of them think, correctly, that the leadership of both parties, and the financial, cultural, intellectual and technological leadership of this country, have contempt for them.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree?

CARLSON: I think they're right, 100 percent.

PLAYBOY: You said something on your show this past summer that raised some eyebrows.

CARLSON: Just one thing?

PLAYBOY: You said, "If you're looking to



understand what's actually happening in this country, always assume the opposite of whatever they're telling you on the big news stations." Do you believe that?

CARLSON: I feel that way strongly.

PLAYBOY: All the big news stations are lying?

CARLSON: I believe that completely. It's 100 percent true. Let me give you the Syria example: In April, we watched a cruise-missile attack on Syria based on the claim that Assad had gassed his own people. If you actually called the State Department and the Department of Defense, which people did, and asked, "Are there American inspectors on the ground?

How do you know that?" the response you'd get was "Well, we don't really know that." Really? Because I didn't read that in *The New York Times*. I read the claims of the government reported as fact. That's a lie. Not only is that a lie, that's a lie with real consequences. People died as a result. So no, they're not interested in telling stories that are outside a narrowly prescribed set of themes they think are okay. Look, you know the truth, which is people feel they have a bigger obligation now—not just to the truth but to keeping the crazy right wing from taking over. If you think you have a bigger obligation to the service of a political mission, that's not journalism; it's something else.

PLAYBOY: But people interpreted your comment not as "Mainstream media has some bias problems" but as "Watch Fox News because everyone else is lying."

CARLSON: I don't need to make that case to Fox viewers. I'm just noticing it. I would also say that this is not some crazy idea I picked up from Twitter. I've been in journalism for 27 years. The people you see on television?

I know them well. In some cases, I know them really well. I've been to their weddings. I have a tangible sense of who these people are and what their motives are. If you hear me weighing in on hydraulic fracking, you should probably disregard what I'm saying, because I'm not an engineer. But if you hear me weighing in on the state of the Washington media, I've been doing this my whole life, so I think I know what I'm talking about.

PLAYBOY: Do you still believe what you said in your 2009 CPAC speech, about the fact-gathering of *The New York Times* and how conservatives should try to do the same?

CARLSON: Just get the dates right; how does that sound? Just be professional about it; that's

all I was saying. My view is, these institutions are hostile to you and your interests, and will never not be. You have two choices: You can whine about that in perpetuity, or you can try to create your own thing. Why wouldn't you? Aren't conservatives always talking about entrepreneurship, bootstrapping, the wonders of the market? If what you say is true, the market has a vacuum and you should be able to get rich filling it. No one ever has, by the way. I don't really know why.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying there is no conservative version of *The New York Times*?

CARLSON: No. I think things will change



because there are so many smart young people, and I'm not talking about right-wingers. I mean anyone with heterodox ideas, anyone who thinks for himself. We're in a moment of total mandatory conformity. Anyone who thinks outside the perimeters must be punished. Most people will go along with that, because most people are compliant. They don't want any hassle. But there is some percentage of smart young people—again, I'm not talking about right-wingers; I'm talking about hard-left people too—who are like, "You know, I'm not going to obey." You always hear people say, "I can't believe the radicalism on the internet!" Why do you think that is? People aren't allowed to say in public things they think are

self-evidently true, so it drives them into the dark recesses of the internet.

PLAYBOY: Do you find it challenging to make sure facts are front and center on your show?

CARLSON: Not at all. We rarely make factual errors.

PLAYBOY: Really?

CARLSON: Really! Because so many people are watching and waiting for us to do that. I had a show last week, we were talking about the amendment to change the constitution of South Africa in order to take land without compensation. At one point I said, "It's already happened," and at another point I corrected myself, saying that it hadn't happened, but it was imminent. I got dozens of people who were like, "You were wrong!" Yeah, but I corrected it immediately. I misspoke. Whatever. I'm not whining, I'm just saying we have to be accurate. For me, the challenge is, are we honest? That's the challenge. That's harder than being accurate. Accuracy is a baseline requirement. But are you really telling the truth? The real truth?

PLAYBOY: What are your thoughts about Rachel Maddow? You gave her one of her first TV gigs on your MSNBC show, right?

PLAYBOY: I did. I really like Rachel Maddow. She's an ideologue. That's not an attack on her at all. Rachel is sincere. She doesn't say things she doesn't believe, and she's not playing a role. The biggest compliment I can give her, and it's heartfelt, is that Rachel does her own thing. She doesn't have a lot of contact with MSNBC management, as far as I understand. I don't think she likes them, and I don't think they like her. I could be wrong. But my sense is that Rachel does the show that she wants to do.

PLAYBOY: As opposed to?

CARLSON: Almost every other person on TV news. When you watch Rachel Maddow's lead, it may or may not bear a resemblance to what *The New York Times* led with. Most TV hosts and producers don't really know what's going on. They follow the lead of somebody else. But the ones who are successful, who you remember, whether you love them or hate them, are deciding for themselves what the news is. That's why we're paid.

PLAYBOY: You get paid to decide what the news is? Are you sure that's true?

CARLSON: It's absolutely true. What's our job? Our job is to decide what's important and why. Fox has never, in the two years I've had the show,



said, “You can’t do that.” I have pure editorial control. So does Rachel Maddow. You can tell.

PLAYBOY: You used to work at CNN. Were you ever told what you could or couldn’t say?

CARLSON: It may be different now, but when I was there, there were network-wide mandatory directives. I’m sure Anderson Cooper can basically do what he wants, but there is an internal “this is what we’re covering today” mandate. Fox has never been like that. No one has ever told me what to do.

PLAYBOY: You once said you stay relaxed when doing the show by imagining that only your wife is watching. Does she watch every night, and if so, does she give you feedback?

CARLSON: She watches all the time, but we don’t talk about work or about politics. Actually, that’s starting to change. Since our last child, our fourth child, left home, we’ll talk about politics occasionally.

PLAYBOY: She knows how you argue. Can you win any argument ever again?

CARLSON: I never argue with my wife.

PLAYBOY: You’re kidding.

CARLSON: Of course not. Argue with my wife? Why would anybody argue with their wife? What would you get out of it? Do you win? *[laughs]* What does final victory look like? Just describe that to me. Does she put all four paws in the air and say, “You’re absolutely right.” What’s the payoff? Is there a psychic victory? But I can honestly say that we have identical views on almost everything.

PLAYBOY: Your mom left when you were young. Did you have any interest in tracking her down?

CARLSON: Not really. I would just sum it up by saying she was a woman who left her two children for a foreign country and never came back. Probably there were some other things going on. It’s not typical. I mean, most mothers, no matter how incompetent or drunk, don’t leave their children. They’re just hard-wired not to. There are exceptions, obviously—I grew up with one—but it’s unusual behavior.

PLAYBOY: That absence is not something you just get over.

CARLSON: It defined my childhood. *[pauses]* You know, the funny thing about that, and one of the reasons I’ve never talked about it, is there’s no winning. Either you lie and say, “I’m so wounded by that.” Or you tell the truth and sound like a sociopath. In my case, the truth is my childhood wasn’t that bad. It was actually pretty fun. I love my dad. Losing my mom was sad, I guess. My parents got divorced because my mom was a nutcase. Boo-hoo, poor me. But my dad got remarried to a wonderful woman, my stepmom, whom I love. I always worried I was suppressing all this rage. I used to say to my girlfriend, now wife, “What am I going to do if she ever reappears?” Then I actually did

get the call, and it turned out she was living in remote France, in the Pyrénées mountains, working as a sculptor.

PLAYBOY: Who found her?

CARLSON: My aunt, a woman I hadn’t talked to since 1977. She called me and said, “Your mother’s dying.” That didn’t even make sense to me. “My mother? Who’s my mother?” And she said, “Your mother. You know, my sister.”

PLAYBOY: What was she dying from?

CARLSON: Lung cancer. From smoking, actually. This was several years ago. I hadn’t heard her voice since she left when I was six. So my aunt said, “She’s dying and she’s going to be gone soon. You’ve got to go visit her.” I thought about it, and I said, “No, I don’t think I do.”

PLAYBOY: You had nothing you needed to say to her?

CARLSON: Not particularly. After that phone call, I went home and had dinner and went to

Why would anybody argue with their wife? What would you get out of it? Do you win?

bed and slept fine. It didn’t really have a big effect on me. I guess it had been so long, and time goes by. I don’t think I’m shallow. I care what people think, or at least the people I love. But I was over it, I guess. I said to my wife, “Remember how I used to say I was going to fall apart, that it would all come rushing back? It didn’t.” I felt sorry for her. I wasn’t mad at her anymore. It was just kind of sad, this woman dying alone in a foreign country.

PLAYBOY: You’re still close with your dad?

CARLSON: Very close. I’ve never had a conversation with him where he didn’t say “I love you” at the end.

PLAYBOY: What’s the best piece of advice your dad ever gave you?

CARLSON: I was going to write a whole book of advice he gave me. He’s a legitimate genius. He was against direct statements of advice, any directives at all. Every Saturday during our childhoods, from first grade until I went to boarding school, he would take my brother and me to the movies. We’d always load up on popcorn and

Milk Duds, massive Cokes and 7-UPs. I’d always have to take a leak by the end of the movie, and my father would corral us away from the bathrooms and say, “No, wait.” We would walk out to the parking lot, and the three of us would take a leak on the tires of a station wagon. One week my brother said, “Pop, why are we doing this? Why can’t we use the bathroom?” My father said, “Never lose touch with your inner dog, boys.” What he was saying was the overwhelming majority of bad decisions come not from following your gut but from ignoring it.

PLAYBOY: What are your dad’s politics?

CARLSON: He isn’t political. He’s never been. He was always an intellectual, a book-a-day guy, an intense-ideas guy. But he doesn’t talk like an intellectual at all. He doesn’t use any of the buzzwords. He never said things like “Well, that’s problematic.”

PLAYBOY: What do you two talk about?

CARLSON: What don’t we talk about?

It’s not like when you see somebody you haven’t talked to in years. My whole world hasn’t changed all that much. I married my high school girlfriend, and my business partner is my college roommate. I keep the circle small. If I love something, I don’t give up on it. I go to only one restaurant. I would be very easy to assassinate.

PLAYBOY: You’ve lived in D.C. since you were 15, but you talk about how phony it is on your show.

CARLSON: Oh, I object to it on all kinds of abstract levels, but as a practical matter, it’s a great city to live in. I’ll never leave Washington. I’ve never not loved it. The pomposity and high self-regard are almost unbearable, but the good news is our neighborhood is stable. It’s totally crime-free, everyone’s nice, we’ve got full employment,

all the kids are above average, the restaurants are improving. It’s 1965 America, before the riots. And it’s not political here; that’s the other thing. It’s so political that it’s nonpolitical.

PLAYBOY: What does that mean?

CARLSON: I had dinner last night with my wife and two other couples. They’re our neighbors and we’ve known them most of our lives. All four of them are liberal Democrats. One of them is a well-known Democratic political consultant. They obviously know my views, but I would never have a political argument with them.

PLAYBOY: Is that because it’s face-to-face and it’s your neighbor? Nobody is going to start screaming, “You’re a Nazi!”

CARLSON: Of course not. Because both of you know the other person isn’t a Nazi. If the tree in your yard is hanging into your neighbor’s yard and you pay to have it pruned, that goes a long way to making him understand that political differences aren’t definitive. They don’t have to be moral differences. This is all just politics. ■

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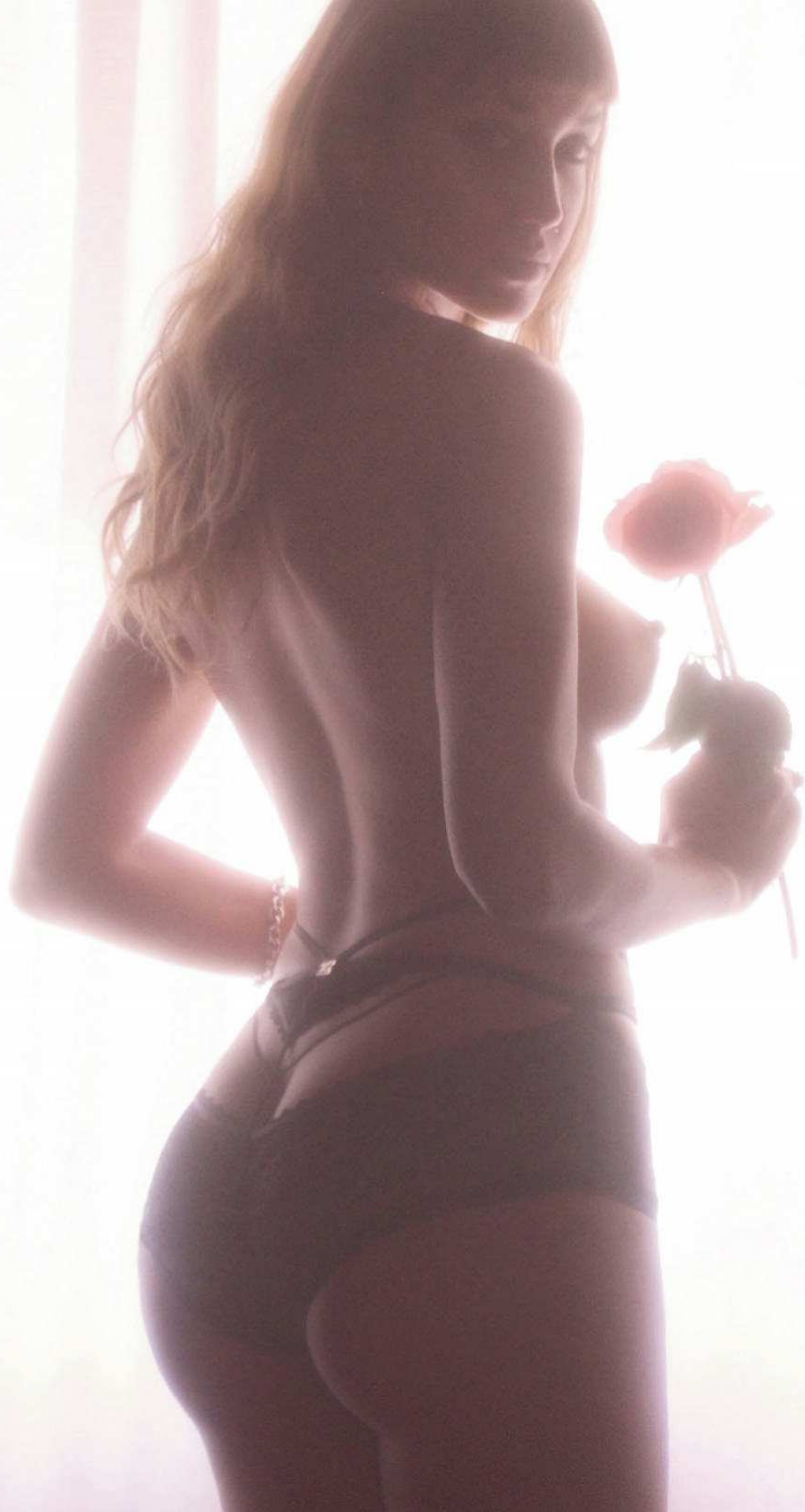
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALEXANDRA LAYUS**



A close-up photograph of a woman's hands holding a vibrant red rose. The hands are adorned with several rings, and the background is a deep, textured red. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the rose and the skin.

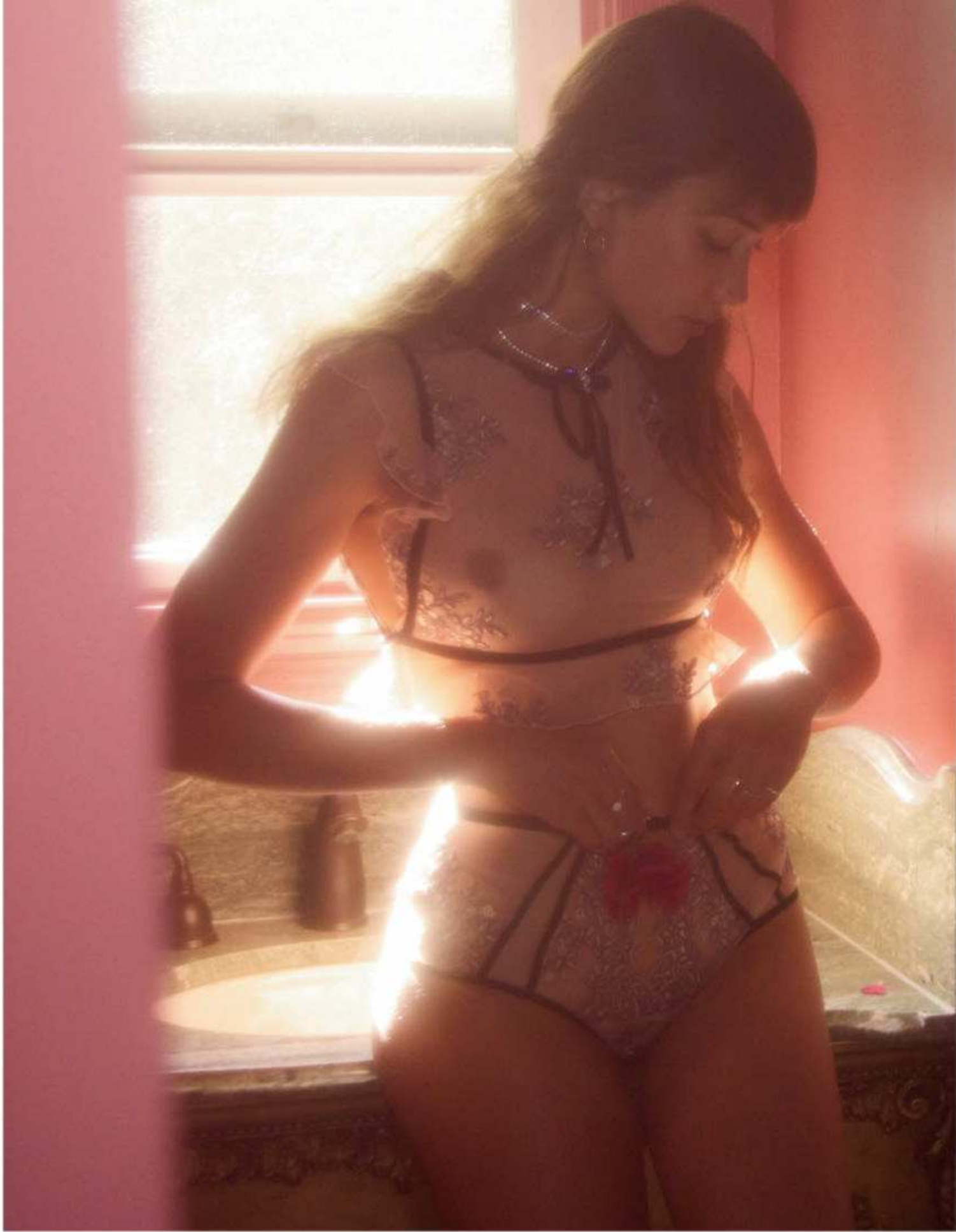
A Rose Is a Rose

Flowers? You shouldn't have. Artist, adventurer and 2017 Playmate of the Year **Brook Power** pays us another swoon-worthy visit









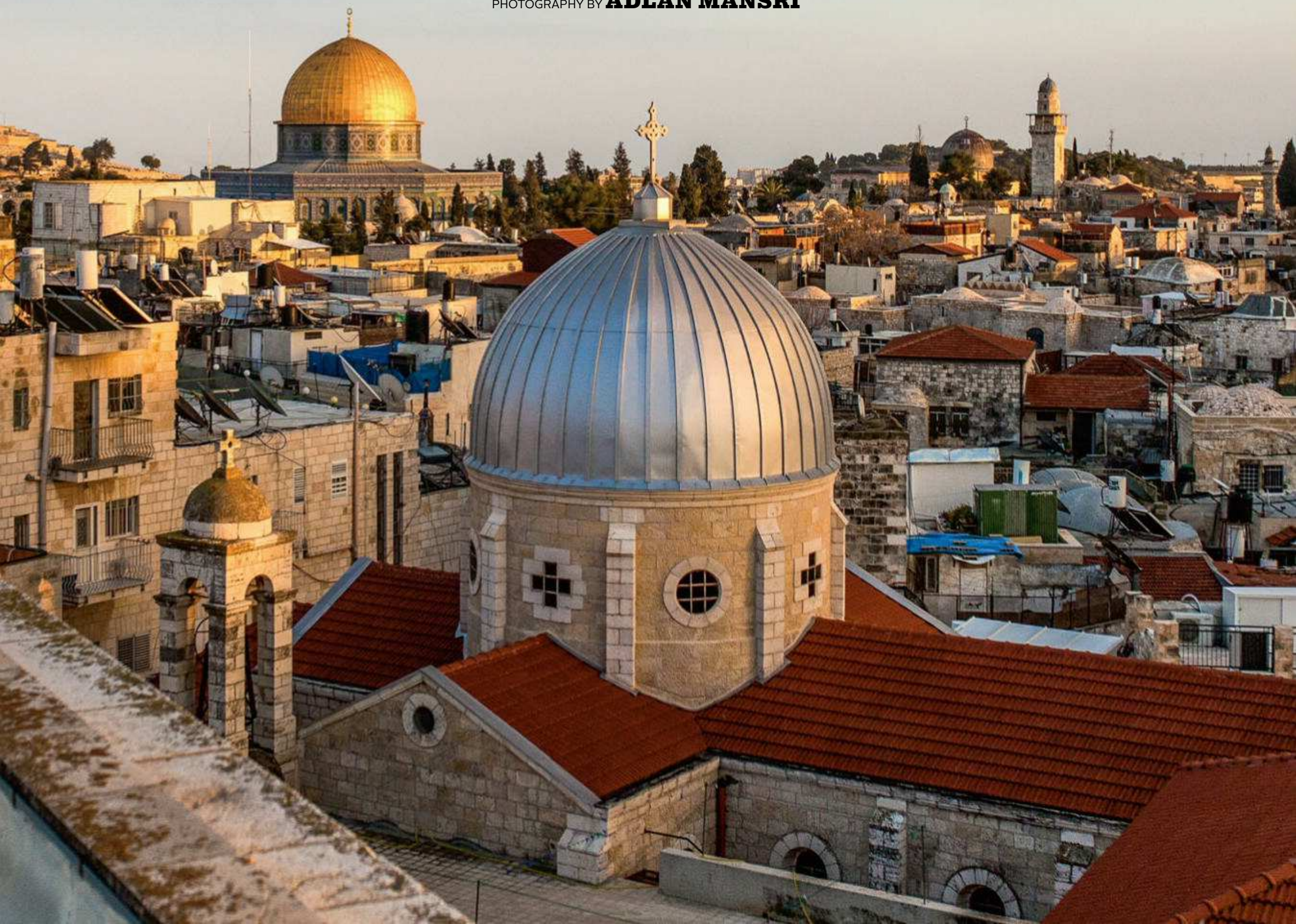




REBIRTH IN BETHLEHEM

How does one attain peace in a land of ubiquitous trauma? Inside the growing bilateral movement to bring healing to Israel-Palestine

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ADLAN MANSRI**





I'm in the passenger seat of a sedan cruising the highway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, passing dry hills, minarets and wire fencing beneath Palestinian villages looming over the road. "Sometimes they throw rocks at the cars," Oren Lebovitch tells me as I try

BY **MADISON MARGOLIN**

to catch a glimpse of the West Bank barrier, a wall that currently spans more than 400 miles. The chairman of Ale Yarak ("Green Leaf"), Israel's cannabis-legalization party, Lebovitch assures me we'll arrive safely at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, which is about to hold a hearing on decriminalization. Post-traumatic stress disorder among the populace is one of many reasons Lebovitch is pushing to get weed legalized.

Cannabis has been therapeutic for many of Israel's 8.5 million citizens—Palestinians too, though in lower numbers. In the past year, 27 percent of Israelis have smoked pot, while nearly 35,000 legally receive medical marijuana. Others smoke hashish or resort to the Russian roulette of opioids to cope with life in an intermittent war zone.

"Some wake up in the middle of the night with nightmares, sweating, even wetting their beds," says Lebovitch. "They can't sleep for more than three hours and get hooked on prescription pills. Every Independence Day, they ask the public not to use firecrackers because it scares them. PTSD was not talked about for years; only lately do they dare to speak out. I think cannabis was one reason for that."

Approaching Jerusalem, Lebovitch fumbles with the radio. News updates interrupt programming on the hour, a lingering wartime convention. It has been relatively quiet this June, save for the times Gaza's sole power plant ran out of fuel, causing days-long outages. (Israel controls Palestinian access to water, gasoline, imports and international travel.)

Almost every Jew, Christian and Muslim in the region knows someone who has suffered under the conflict. Rampant trauma inevitably informs both Israeli and Palestinian narratives, from policy to daily life. For peace to become viable, the conflict's victims desperately need new methods to

address their pain amid the region's stubborn and blood-stained politics.

...

A few days after visiting the Knesset (which, to Lebovitch's dismay, will eventually pass a tepid decriminalization policy), I hop a bus at Damascus Gate, outside Jerusalem's Old City. I'm going to visit Antwan Saca, an activist working to raise awareness around PTSD and the ways it afflicts soldiers and civilians on both sides of the wall. I naively offer the driver my Rav-Kav, or Israeli bus pass. He chuckles and waves his hand, so I drop him some shekels instead. You can use Israeli currency in Palestine, but not your Rav-Kav to board a Palestinian bus.

It's a half-hour ride, past black-hat Hasidim, bare-legged joggers and much in between, to the Bethlehem checkpoint. I sail through the near-empty maze of cement—it's more complicated to get out of Palestine than to get in—and imagine what it must be like at rush hour. On a typical day hundreds of Palestinians line up here between two and eight A.M. This is, Saca later tells me, one of the few exits serving a region with a population of 600,000. People unbuckle their belts at security scanners. Israel Defense Forces guard every corner.

On the other side, men hang out on the street, drinking tea and playing board games. The sidewalk is crude; weeds poke out around the alleyways. I peruse a bodega, where the Israeli brands I'm used to are mostly absent, and wait for Saca, who promptly pulls up in a rusty silver Ford Focus. A 34-year-old Palestinian Christian with a grizzly beard and kind eyes,

he looks like a teddy bear despite his T-shirt, which reads WARRIOR.

We pass the wall, rife with graffiti and murals, and drive through the meandering Old City of Bethlehem. A large black cross looms over the single-lane road. Smooth, sand-colored stone adorns the walls of connected homes, shops and offices. He leads me to a rooftop café and orders tea.

"Welcome to the Holy Land," Saca says. "All of us come with deep, inherited trauma. A healing process is needed." At the time of our interview, he is serving as director of programs for Holy Land Trust, a nongovernmental organization that helps Palestinians explore their identity and personal experiences. A few months later he'll quit, turning toward conciliatory therapies for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Such has been the passion of a young Israeli-Palestinian generation looking to confront the psychic impact of the region's religious warfare and identity politics. Employing cannabis and psychedelics, art and dialogue, they hope to heal those who will inherit these lands and, in doing so, heal the region.

"To be free means freedom from traumatic experiences, healing from the pain of consistent, existential threat," Saca says. Working through psychological damage—from a place of empowerment, not victimhood—could allow Israelis and Palestinians to achieve a peace that responds to the needs of both sides, he suggests. "If that isn't realized, through nonviolent activism, then we're only creating a bubble."

Most discourse around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict follows the same political divisions and tired headlines that do little but cause further polarization. Saca's vision is simply that the peace process must address trauma in order to succeed. But as compelling as his case may be, the question remains: Can drugs and therapy come anywhere near the power of tanks and rockets?

...

If you can take one commonality from the region's vast and tangled past, it's that Israelis and Palestinians both suffer from generations of dehumanization. The Jewish story revolves around issues of security, anti-Semitism and persecution in European and Arab lands; for



Opposite: A view of Jerusalem's Old City. **Above:** Pedestrians stroll past the Israeli security barrier in Bethlehem.

Palestine, it's a history of displacement and erasure of national identity.

Three decades after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which supported transferring rule of Palestine from the Ottomans to the Brits in order to provide a Jewish homeland, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181 to create two states, effectively ending the British Mandate. As told in the composite text *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine*, "Arab attacks on Jewish residents began the next morning, as the Arabs did not accept the partition plan," while "this was in fact the start of the countdown for the establishment of the State Israel on 15 May 1948 and the 1948 *Nakbah* ['Catastrophe'], which uprooted and dispersed the Palestinian people."

The Oslo Accords process, a series of negotiations in the 1990s, is typically seen as the attempt that came closest to achieving peace and agreed-upon borders—and has been undermined by extremism and distrust on both sides, including increases in terrorism and continued settlement in the West Bank. The security barrier, the checkpoints, the Second Intifada (a Palestinian uprising marked by suicide bombings met with Israeli military aggression) and a hard-right swing in the Israeli government were products of Oslo's failure.

"The generation before me had a different vision of peace," Saca says. "They used to encounter each other on a daily basis." But the ensuing physical and psychological separation has only hardened Israeli and Palestinian estrangement. Post-Oslo, Hamas rose to power, and peace ideals dissolved into cynicism and violence.

Trauma is a daily part of life here, the result of harrowing tragedies and micro-episodes alike. Gaza has its electrical outages, Israel its Red Alert app notifications whenever rockets are launched into its airspace. The sight of army tanks, uniformed personnel and drones can all act as triggers, says Saca. So too can the sound of a balloon popping, which caused an Israeli acquaintance to dive to the floor in a Tel Aviv mall.

The numbers around PTSD in the region can be surprisingly low considering the vast swaths

of Israeli and Palestinian populations exposed to violence or the threat thereof. Suicide, not war, has been the primary cause of death within the Israel Defense Forces. Meanwhile, 40 percent of children from towns such as Sderot, on the Gaza border, suffer from PTSD, and in Gaza, up to 92 percent of teens might display symptoms during wartime. According to a study based on biographical sketches of 50 suicide attackers, 44 had grievances resulting from IDF operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The condition is more likely to be exploited than treated. "PTSD develops on an individual level with fear memories that can be manipulated by politicians to promote their agendas," explains Yoav Litvin, an Israeli American writer, photographer and doctor of psychology and behavioral science. The region's politics reflect and nurture PTSD, magnifying the existential threat inherent in the Israeli and Palestinian narratives.

Fear also strengthens the brain's left side, which then inhibits the right side from noticing the details that could mitigate fear, Litvin adds. The left side tells you an owl and an eagle are both birds, while the right side looks for differences between them. So fear between two populations keeps each one from appreciating the "other" as human. This is especially pertinent for young adults, including 18- to 22-year-old soldiers, for whom the prefrontal cortex is still developing. Because this part of the brain

is involved in decision-making, impulse inhibition, social behavior and judgment, the demographic is particularly impressionable and more prone to forming fearful associations, Litvin points out.

These tendencies may also lead to a victim ethos. "Israeli politicians invoke fear by perpetuating a victim narrative based on centuries of real persecution of Jewish peoples," Litvin wrote on the blog Mondoweiss. "In effect, they reinforce a form of collective PTSD, whereby annihilation is eternally around the corner. Thus, fear enables a level of aggression and oppression that is part of daily life in the reality of occupation."

Although it's difficult to replace fear with



"THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE THAT A JEW HAD TOUCHED HER. AND IT FELT GOOD."



empathy in the shadow of a wall, “universal human languages” such as art and music can bridge gaps, he says. “People are people. This isn’t a religious conflict but a conflict between an occupying force and the occupied. Once people have something to live for, then they don’t want to shoot missiles and they don’t want to get into tanks.”

One state, two state, five states, no state—peace is about more than just borders and the dense binary of politics. Peace is a way of interacting with the other such that common ground (figuratively and literally, in this case) dissolves the notion of “other” altogether.

“On both sides, people go to sleep wishing the other side will disappear, but the reality is nobody is going away,” Saca says. “The eventual outcome is that people need to learn to share this land.”

...

To decompress and ease the transition into civilian life at home, many IDF veterans go abroad after their service. Every year some 40,000 Israelis backpack through India, where 90 percent of them use cannabis and 25 percent use psychedelics, says a spokesperson for

Hapina Shelanu, a safe zone in India that helps Israelis process their psychedelic and high-risk experiences. After partying on the beaches of Goa (a hot spot on the so-called “hummus trail”), Israeli trance fans bring the music—and drug experiences—back home.

Most Israelis get their drugs illegally since the medical cannabis program serves only patients for whom traditional treatments have failed for at least a year. Israeli cannabis provider Tikun Olam (“Repair the World”) found that more than 84 percent of PTSD patients reported improvement after using pot. Cannabis treats PTSD symptoms by suppressing dream and/or nightmare recall and focusing patients on the present, explains Rick Doblin, executive director of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, or MAPS. But to actually cure PTSD, there’s another option.

“If you were to design a drug to treat PTSD, MDMA would be it,” Doblin says. Because PTSD increases activity in the amygdala, which processes fear, and decreases activity in the prefrontal cortex, which generates rational thought, it destroys trust and makes it difficult to feel safe. MDMA, on the other hand, “decreases activity

Clockwise from far left: St. Mary’s Syrian Orthodox Church overlooks a Bethlehem street. Peace activist Antwan Saca and the wall. Two Muslim girls pass a Christian shop near the Nativity Church. A predominantly Muslim neighborhood near Damascus Gate in Jerusalem’s Old City. All aboard the Jerusalem Light Rail.

in the amygdala, increases activity in the prefrontal cortex and increases connectivity between the hippocampus and amygdala, where memories are moved into long-term storage,” he says. “With PTSD, memories are never in the past; they’re always about to happen again.” So MDMA allows people to look at memories with less fear attached and fully process their emotions. The once-called “love drug” also releases the hormones prolactin and oxytocin, which build feelings of trust and safety.

MAPS has been conducting MDMA-assisted psychotherapy studies in Israel for more than a decade. The treatment has been successful for more than 83 percent of PTSD patients who’ve undergone two eight-hour MDMA sessions.

The obvious reality, though, is that the psychedelic solution is available only to a few—and fewer still in Palestine. “When you walk in the

street, you rarely find anyone smiling,” says Gazan writer Wajiha Al Abyad. “People’s perspective on life is totally damaged. We’re just waiting for another war to launch.” Children in Gaza are more aggressive toward themselves and each other too, she adds. “You reach a point where you have to choose whether to continue with this anger, aggression and desire for revenge, or to just forgive and to live in peace.”

But attaining that goal will require more than mind-altering substances.

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Psychologist Mohammad Mansour with Physicians for Human Rights Israel treats Gazans’ “conflict trauma” and “continued post-trauma.” Without stable electricity or freedom of movement, along with high unemployment and dirty water, Gaza is widely described as an “open-air prison.” Mansour performs family and individual interventions, delivers an annual conference on mental health in the Gaza Strip and trains counselors from the Palestinian Ministry of Health and other organizations. “Because of the continuation of attacks and the siege in Gaza, we try to build psychological immunity and resiliency,” he says. Laughing, playing, going about routine life despite war—simple actions such as these, along with nonviolent resistance, help the healing process.

Parents also need to make space for children’s emotions. “Pain that is not transformed is transmitted,” says Nitsan Joy Gordon, lecturer-facilitator at the integrated Tel Hai College Field Studies Department, paraphrasing author Richard Rohr. “Caretakers need to give children, especially boys, the message that it’s okay to cry, it’s okay to have your feelings; when we are disconnected from our feelings and pain, it’s harder to feel empathy toward other people and easier to act in horrible ways.”

Through compassionate-listening workshops, playback theater and dance therapy, participants share their stories, cry, hear others and feel heard. Programs such as Gordon’s and Holy Land Trust help people confront fear, trauma and prejudices—without walking out when it gets tough—and face the “other” on a



Palestinians and Israeli military personnel share a street corner in Jerusalem’s Old City.

human level. “I still remember sitting across from a Palestinian woman, massaging each other’s hands toward the end of one meeting,” says Gordon. “Later she said that this was the first time in her life that a Jew had touched her. And it felt good.”

Empathy can manifest in policy too, as demonstrated by other war-torn regions. “Projects we see from South Africa, Ireland and Rwanda show that recognizing trauma was very important in the process of healing those societies,” says Liel Maghen, co-director of the Israel-Palestine Creative Regional Initiatives. “There should be an official recognition of the responsibility for the trauma toward the other, which can be by an official apology.” In Northern Ireland and apartheid South Africa, there was a “transitional justice process” in which the solution was based on power sharing rather than splitting land, adds Maghen, who also recommends integrating schools and rebuilding demolished homes. “Israelis want recognition of a Jewish state, their connection to the land, and Palestinians want human rights,” he says. “There’s always tension, so it’s a question of what you do with it.”

Antwan Saca finds hope in the reconciliation between Germans and Jews. And in light of American influence, left-leaning millennials and Gen Xers, according to the Brookings Institution, are fast becoming the largest voting bloc—large enough to oust politicians with regressive tribal views.

As to the tension Maghen brings up, the answer can be quite simple: “Create a culture that engages with it,” he says.

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The urgency and wrenching difficulty of this work suffuses the story of a Palestinian named Bassam Aramin. At the age of 17, Aramin began to serve seven years in prison: He saw his actions as resistance, while Israeli security forces labeled him a terrorist. He taught himself Hebrew and learned about the Holocaust. What he once believed was an Israeli lie brought tears to his eyes. Aramin finished his time, established the bi-national nonviolence organization Combatants

for Peace—and then found his ideals challenged: An Israeli soldier injured his 10-year-old daughter near her school. She died days later. “There is no revenge,” says Aramin as he recalls seeing the soldier in court. “The killer of my daughter is a victim. I have five more kids. I don’t want them to grow up victims. You move to a place where you feel stronger than this victim. I take revenge by forgiving him without any mercy.”

Today Aramin is a member of the Parents Circle, a collective of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian parents. Jesus said to love your enemy, he points out. “That means to love someone who comes to kill you. He cannot harm you because love is stronger than hatred. It’s very simple, but it’s very difficult to practice.”

Aramin’s battle-scarred passion is there in Saca’s vision that morning on the rooftop: Healing from trauma means living in the present by honoring the past without letting it dictate the future.

Later that night, I’m in Yafo, a beachy mixed Palestinian-Israeli town south of Tel Aviv. I’m with friends at one of my favorite bars, a place called Anna Loulou, and we’re drinking our Taybeh and Goldstar (Palestinian and Israeli beers, respectively), lighting joints outside, dancing together, Jews and Arabs, sharing one of the city’s liveliest hideouts. We’re not signing treaties or pushing a “solution,” but it’s peaceful here, and part of a process: Israelis and Palestinians co-existing in this complicated, chaotic and beautiful plot of the Holy Land. ■





THE QUEEN OF MAJESTIC

FICTION BY **T. JEFFERSON PARKER**

The desert sky was vast and salted with stars. Bill stepped away from the telescope so Margo could look. The telescope was powerful and expensive, a present from Margo to Bill on his 60th birthday, the month before. He lifted the bottle of wine from the hood of the Jeep and poured some into their glasses. Bill took a sip and looked at his wife standing at the tripod, her back to him, her hands out and away from the delicate instrument, which tracked the chosen target with a computer and a silent motor. Margo leaned slightly at the waist. White summer dress. Thick brown hair. She was still shapely and Bill felt lucky to have married her those 30-plus years ago. He had never fully believed that he deserved her, though she was an occasional challenge.

"I wonder what that is," she said.

"Where?"

"Out over the hills."

He looked and saw nothing. It was just before 10 o'clock and the fierce Mojave heat was gone. Bill took another sip of wine and felt the thankfulness

come over him. Their health was good. Their children were on their own now, both doing well. The LAPD pension was ample. They still owned their longtime Simi Valley house, and their renters were dependable.

The new job out here in the desert was every bit as challenging and goofy as he had hoped it would be. Police Chief Bill Overlake of Majestic, California, population 378 humans, 12 horses, 10 to 20 dogs not counting wild ones, and six burros. The job kept him active, brought in money, and got him and Margo away from Los Angeles. But they were still close to Las Vegas, where their son Zach and his family had settled, close enough to L.A. for visits and shopping, and close to the Sierras for fishing. And they were living under the clear Mojave sky for stargazing, the newfound pleasures of which had surprised them both.

"I don't see anything but stars," said Bill.

"I'll sic the computer on it. Satellite I bet."

"Plenty of those."

"Spying on us," she said.

ILLUSTRATION BY **MARC ASPINALL**





“That’s just the media scaring people, honey. Fear sells.”

“I have nothing to fear because you’ll protect me.”

“And serve. In any way you want to be served.”

“I know what that means, Mr. Billy Goat. No lights on that UFO, whatever it is.”

“No lights. A smuggler?”

“Maybe. Slow, for a plane. Either that or it’s further away than it looks.”

“Let me see.”

Margo stepped away. “It’s tracking perfectly. This computer is something.”

Bill settled into gazing position, his wife’s perfume and faint body heat still lingering near the aperture. He saw the movement, something dark suspended within the larger darkness. It was shapeless from here, flying low and slowly and, to Bill’s eye, in a straight line, east to west. Then it appeared to turn toward them. He watched for a moment to make sure he was seeing it right.

“Coming this way now,” he said.

“What is it?”

“I still can’t tell.” He watched it moving closer. Things like this—small, unusual, unexplainable things—were part of what made stargazing what it was. Meteors and satellites. Weather balloons and UFOs. He lifted his face from the telescope for a moment and peered naked-eyed toward the low sky over the hills and saw that some of the heavenly points of light were going out then coming back on as something passed between them and him. Eye again to the scope, he saw it was closer now.

“Bill, is that a motor I hear?” Her ears were better than his now, after his years at the range, qualifying for the job and shooting on the team.

“Oh wow,” he said. “It’s a fixed-wing something-or-other. It looks like a glider. Weird, though, without the lights.”

“There it is! Way out there. And I do hear a motor.”

“An ultralight? A drone? This tracking computer is amazing, Margo.”

Bill watched the craft coming toward them. The engine groaned distantly. It didn’t sound strong enough to keep something that large aloft. Now that it was closer he saw that the underside was pale and faintly, icily blue, like moonlight. The wings were long and wide and the body slender. It looked lighter and less substantial than an airplane, but larger than the Predator drones he’d seen, not clunky like an ultralight, but graceful. And now that it was no more than half a mile away, Bill’s birthday telescope revealed the faint, flickering lights inside a bulbous faceted head and the four missiles—two under each wing—fixed tight to the body. “Damn thing’s armed,” he said. “Gotta be dummies. Am I seeing this right?”

“I swear to God it’s coming lower, Bill. And right at us.”

“I hear it now.”

“I’m afraid. What do we do?”

“Honey, don’t.”

Margo was quicker to fear than her husband, so he often found himself acting on her fear rather than by his own calmer nature. But it was important to keep your spouse feeling protected and served. A 30-year L.A. cop learned that. And so far as the food chain went, he was right up at the top. Awareness, not fear. Preparation, not worry. Cool, not hysteria.

“We better do something, Bill.”

“Give it five more seconds.”

“Why? And then what?”

“Okay, okay—we’ll play it safe, Margo. You hustle away from here the same way we came in. Careful with the knee. Find some cover, hide and wait. I’ll take the Jeep the other way then circle back and get you. Go now. It’s okay.”

She looked at the thing, then back at him, wide-eyed. “I love you, Bill.”

“I love you. We’ll laugh about this later.”

He watched her run up the two-track they’d come in on, brown hair bouncing, elbows in and forearms up.

When he looked up toward the hills again he was surprised how much closer the strange, unlit craft had come. He felt that a truth was dawning on him, but he wasn’t sure exactly what truth it was.

Bill grabbed the tripod and swung open a rear door and dropped the instrument onto the backseat, its legs still splayed. When he shut the door the wine bottle teetered and the wineglasses shivered and Bill backhanded them off the hood and into a creosote bush. He got in and started the engine and looked at Margo. She had already put some good distance between them. As if she felt his eyes on her, she glanced back midstride and Bill laid into the horn to say I love you too, then threw the shifter into drive and gunned it into the flat dark desert.

The desert was not as flat as it looked. The Jeep sat up high, and the faster he went the harder it jolted and jumped when it hit the mounds of dirt and rocks and bushes and cacti, only to plummet gut-droppingly into the soft low pockets of sand. He tried to steer around such things, but soon he was going too fast to avoid anything. He shot a look into the sideview for Margo: nothing but bouncing black earth. He roared up a hillcock, and when he cleared the rise, the pale blue underbelly of the aircraft squared itself in his rearview mirror. *Shit*, he thought. *But good. On me. Margo okay.* He charged across the small plateau, down the other side and back onto the flats, the airborne thing still glued to his rearview, unvarying and slowly closing, maybe a quarter mile back.

Bill hit a sand flat. He wondered if his Jeep—it had the big V-8—might just outrun the lumbering device following him, so he floored it. The tires dug in then rode higher and true as he accelerated. But when he turned for a quick look, the flying machine was closer than he thought. Then the Joshua trees were whizzing spikily past him, as if they’d jumped in from

the darkness, and he cranked the wheel to miss the closest one. This sudden turn aimed him toward another bladed tree just a few yards away, which he managed to only clip with the grille of the Jeep, but that left him braking and sandplowing toward another tree that he hit broadside. The heavy telescope hurtled through the windshield and slammed into the tree as if to protect him from it.

He got his autoloader from the glove box, jacked a round into the chamber and climbed out. Through the spined canopy above him he could see the plane, drone, phantom, whatever it was, humming steadily in on its course. He leaned back against the Jeep, raised the .40 caliber, found a space in the Joshua tree limbs and held a little ahead of his oncoming target. Squeezed off three rounds. Bill had been part of the LAPD shooting team and he was used to the idea that bullets went where he made them go. After the third shot, when nothing at all happened to his target, Bill realized what a stupendously useless idea this was, throwing bullets against a flying monster in the black of night. He held a little higher and fired off three more rounds anyway.

Against all odds—but in keeping with his faith in a higher and beneficent power—at least one of the bullets must have hit its mark. Because Bill saw a quick puff of white smoke, then a red ember—a small explosion. Had he hit a fuel line? Sparked a fire? Then the ember sprouted a white tail and streaked across the sky toward Bill. It came very fast, then much faster. Bill raised his sidearm to the flaming, smoke-tailed devil, settled into his shooter’s stance and gauged his lead.

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Margo saw the fiery descent of the rocket and heard the explosion. A lump of orange light rose from Bill’s direction. She was in the middle of the Mojave Desert, bent over, hands on her knees, breathing rapidly. Not so much as a boulder to hide behind. Not a tree. Not even a low spot for cover. Faint and far out, the mother ship banked into a neat pale-bellied turn, and came straight toward her.

She turned and ran. Ran with all her heart. And more. Legs so heavy. Stars and tears. Tears and stars. *Bill. Zach and Jan.* Sound of the engine coming. And her own breath bellowing in her ears, roar of life, in and out.

Sucking air, she slowed and stopped and turned to see. It came. Half a mile out? A quarter? The orange dome of flames still glowed in the east, now tipped in black. She went to one knee and picked a rock off the ground, a round throwing-size rock. She’d pitched softball in college, partial scholarship, high 60s on a good day. She was feared. When the missile bloomed silently she stood to face it, cradling the stone before her in both hands—as she used to do on the pitcher’s mound—ready to windmill her arm and shift that weight to her rear leg. Just before the delivery she would tell herself: *You*



can't hit me, you can't hit me. She waited, her arm now a sling against this Goliath.

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Forty-eight minutes later, just after 11, the little convoy came barreling across the desert on a faint two-track. A truck-mounted crane bounced nimbly on oversize tires designed for desert warfare. A railed flatbed dually came next, its cargo hold containing two crude wooden trunks, reinforced with metal bands,

put it in one of the trunks, then closed the lid. They found flashlights and spread out unhurriedly away from where the Jeep had been, light beams crossing and uncrossing, picking up things from the desert floor and dropping them into orange plastic buckets. Two of the men had long-handled metal detectors. When they were finished they hoisted their buckets into the flatbed that contained the remains of the vehicle, then three of them pulled leaf

much happened outdoors in the middle of the Mojave Desert, especially in the punitively hot summer. The bottom three rows showed live feeds from some of the homes and businesses of tiny Majestic, just five miles from here. The citizenry had no idea that they were being watched and recorded like this, which was the whole point. Dixie thought of the unknowing people as friends, and sometimes—jokingly, of course—of herself as their Queen. It took her 66 seconds to read all 60 screens—out of boredom she'd timed herself.

But she had been trained by AlphaNeutronica to miss nothing, and that is exactly what she missed. So far, the summer's exterior highlights were coyotes running down jackrabbits, foxes hunting kangaroo rats, desert tortoises lumbering around in what looked like loneliness and some interesting little snakes that could glide under the sand without digging a hole. Once she'd seen a car park and the people inside begin to mate. He was a middle-aged man with plump hairless knuckles, and she a young woman, both of them eager. They were disgusting.

Dixie's Talon-2 autonomous unmanned airborne vehicles featured fourth-generation Owl surveillance clusters. The Talon-2 was technically still in development, but the marketers were already taking orders worldwide.

It could deliver real-time, high-res video of, say, a sand snake—a foot long at best—from 35,000 feet away.

As the name said, it was unmanned, thus no onboard pilot needed. And because it was autonomous, the Talon-2 required no remote pilot either. No human required to fly its mission, once the programming was done. A flying machine with a mind, literally, of its own. Or so the designers liked to say. Employees of AlphaNeutronica were forbidden to call an AUAV a drone—ever, under any circumstances, even to friends. A company spokesman was once fired for using the word in an interview. Nevertheless, AlphaNeutronica was known within the military industry as the world's largest manufacturer of drones and strategic nuclear weapons.

The dog on the floor beside her extended its legs in a quivering stretch and took a noisy deep breath without waking up. Orwell was a world-class sleeper. Dixie was about to turn her attention to the much more interesting interior surveillance screens in Majestic when something on screen eight, top row, caught her infallible eye. At first it looked like one of the light-hungry moths or beetles that occasionally got into the room. But Dixie saw that the motion was part of the feed. A vehicle had just entered Sector NW-1, the northwestern boundary of AlphaNeutronica's surveillance grid. As programmed, the Talon-2 hovered and Owl

HE RAISED THE .40 CALIBER, SQUEEZED OFF THREE ROUNDS.

the size and shape of coffins. Bringing up the rear was another flatbed, empty. These three vehicles were chromeless and painted matte black, and the windows were dark and nonreflecting. Leading the charge was a short, low-slung, big-tired sand buggy with a roll cage and two powerful headlights, and a warning whip now curved backward with speed. Matte gray. The driver, in a ball cap and goggles within the cage of his speeding vehicle, played back and forth across the sand, rhythmically, like a downhill skier, his gloved hands relaxed on the wheel.

When the narrow half-road dwindled to nothing, the vehicles all slowed and spread into the desert and picked their way forward. They went to the carcass of the Jeep first. The big crane lifted the twisted, smoldering, sand-dripping body high into the air and swung it onto the empty flatbed. Two men and two women in desert camo and combat boots worked a large olive tarp over the husk and ran nylon ropes through the grommets and cinched it down. Then another tarp, crossways, and another passing of the rope up and over. Two other men in camo stood and watched. The dune-buggy driver paced, occasionally checking his watch. He wore jeans and cowboy boots, the ball cap and an untucked work shirt.

Next they collected the body of the man and

blowers from the other dually. They trotted out as far as their search had taken them, started up the blowers and backed across the desert floor, erasing their footprints from the surface, all the way back to the vehicles idling in the moon-brushed darkness. The dust formed a cloud.

Within minutes and half a mile, they boxed the woman and slid her into the truck bed beside the man. They collected and swept her area too. Another, smaller, dust cloud formed. Then the vehicles trundled out the way they'd come in, same order, nonreflectingly, vanishing a few pixels at a time into the east.

2

Eight miles away and deep in the AlphaNeutronica compound, surveillance analyst Dixie Willoughby sat in the theater and moved her gaze from monitor to monitor, left to right, then back, down a row and across again, like reading. An old yellow Labrador slept on his pad beside her.

It was quarter to 10 at night and she was almost two hours into her shift. There were 60 monitors in all, arranged in six tiers of 10, forming the front wall of the theater. Dixie sat at her workstation, centered to the screens and 20 feet back. The top three rows of monitors were dedicated to exterior surveillance, not Dixie's favorite, because really nothing



zoomed in. Zoomed again. Using the controls on her console Dixie overrode the Owl sensor ball and came in even tighter.

She saw a late model Jeep, black and white, with a light bar on top, speeding crazily across the desert. She recognized the vehicle and driver—the recently hired Majestic police chief Bill Overlake. For some weeks now Dixie had observed Bill and his wife out here at night, their little telescope set up, drinking wine and talking about whatever old married people talked about. No sign of her now. Margie? Maggie? Bill and his wife seemed like nice enough people. Dixie had seen them at the Roadrunner Café, and at the Red Face Trading Post, buying newspapers and coffee. Bill was sure in a hurry now. With the Owl zoom locked in at maximum, Dixie could see the sweat on Bill's face, saw him glance up at the rearview, his expression grim.

She pulled back to see what was behind Bill Overlake, but suddenly all 60 surveillance monitors went dark.

Great, she thought. The most interesting thing all night, now a blackout. It was probably one of the occasional unannounced blackouts engineered by Marcus Spahn himself and later revealed to be part of cybersecurity countermeasures. In that case, the monitors would be back online in a few minutes.

Dixie sat in the screen-darkened theater. The lights and air conditioning were still on. Orwell had sensed the change, so he plodded over and looked up at her, his face filled with sleepy devotion. Dixie bent over and rubbed the back of one ear, then the other. He crashed to the carpet with pleasure, tail tapping.

To Dixie, there was something beautiful about the unconditional love that Orwell gave her. Dixie was six feet three inches tall and full-bodied. For most of her life she had been told she was hulking, so she thought of herself as hulking. She embraced her hulkingness by wearing loose black clothing and big black Dr. Martens boots that looked as if they were made for moonwalking. She stood up straight. She had dense black hair that formed a kind of privacy screen around her pleasant face, a peaches-and-cream complexion, and blue eyes behind nerdish glasses.

She swiped her employee card at the exit and waited for the door's complex unlocking sounds to finally resolve. When the door closed behind Orwell the same sounds locked them out.

In the lunchroom, security guard Nelson was pouring coffee while guard Weber sipped his own, looking through the steam at Dixie.

"The monitors are all down," she said.

"Spahn probably. I just made coffee."

"No, thanks. I'm going outside."

"It's a free country."

"That's funny, Weber, considering what we do here."

Through the coffee steam she caught his look, a perfect security guard's combination of humorlessness and suspicion.

She went outside and upstairs and stood at the railing of the employee patio, looking down at the AlphaNeutronica compound below and the dark desert beyond. There were a few lights on in Marcus Spahn's beloved lethal autonomous unmanned aerial vehicle annex, where the armed, autonomous crafts were designed and assembled.

Dixie saw people moving around down there, most unusual for this time of night. Then she heard vehicles starting up. "What do you make of all that, Orwell? What's Marcus up to now?"

Could be anything, she thought. As AlphaNeutronica's top test engineer, Spahn had a hand in most projects. But the LAUAVs were his babies, and very little was known about the LAUAVs outside of Spahn's elite team. The Lethal Team. They were a happily arrogant crew. Marcus Spahn was darkly handsome and he knew it, and he hired unreasonably attractive people too, so that you didn't need to ask if any one of them was LAUAV; it was pretty much written on their faces.

beautiful, swashbuckling LAUAV people had their own mess hall and kept their own hours. For days, sometimes weeks at a time, they'd all be gone—out at the fabled proving grounds, or perhaps in meetings with AlphaNeutronica founder Dr. James Vermange in his Nob Hill mansion, Tahoe compound or San Marino estate.

Now something unusual was afoot down in the annex. She heard idling vehicles and thumping sounds and low sporadic voices that were carried back to her by the dry desert breeze. Curt voices. Serious. Someone in charge. Spahn? Hard to say. Going? Going where? Too bad her monitors were all out or she could just sit back and watch the show. Then in the dim moonlight Dixie saw the convoy heading down the LAUAV-only dirt road toward the LAUAV-only gate in the LAUAV-only chain-link fence that separated them from the rest of AlphaNeutronica and the world.

• • •

One hour and 40 minutes later Dixie's monitors were still nonoperational but the Lethal Team was on its way home. In the break room she looped Orwell's leash to a table leg, clocked out for her break and took the back stairs down to avoid Nelson and Weber. She stayed within the desert blackness as she made her way toward the LAUAV annex.

SHE HEARD IDLING VEHICLES AND LOW, CURT VOICES.

Although there was something genuine about Spahn's face, in Dixie's opinion. Not that she saw him up close very often. Surveillance analysts, grade three, such as Dixie—and other lesser players here at AlphaNeutronica—were not even close to cleared for LAUAV annex access. Her employee badge would literally set off alarms if she tried to swipe her way in. And the whole annex was surrounded by butt-ugly, desert-rusted, 10-foot-high chain link anyway. The

Of course the Lethal Team area was verboten, but one of the gates was often left unlocked by scofflaw employees. And she knew that if she could find Spahn before one of his underlings threw her out, he just *might* let her know what all the excitement was about. She believed this because, in the exactly six times that she had made eye contact with Spahn, his peaceful-looking gray eyes had held her gaze with steadiness, curiosity and—she thought—interest.

Her lucky night. She closed the gate quietly



behind her and followed the path toward the compound. The vehicles were shutting down and doors were opening and closing and short bursts of conversation came from the central terminal—an enormous metal barn with four rolling metal doors along each long side and small windows set at eight feet to admit sunlight and defeat the curious. Now only minimal light from inside.

She stopped in the solid darkness, short of the weak terminal light. She saw princely Spahn and two of his knights in conversation. Saw two Lethal Teamers pulling down tarps from a charred vehicle standing on a flatbed. A Jeep. With a star-shaped outline on the door where an emblem had apparently melted off. Light bar half severed, half dangling.

Dixie's heart dropped. She backstepped farther into the dark, then circled to one side of the building and came up close. Darkness and dirt under her boots, the mumble of voices inside. She crept to the edge of the raised rolling door. A good view from behind them now: two grim-faced men she'd seen but never met, handing down a coffin-like box to two other men she'd seen but never met. Spahn and the others watching. The box didn't look heavy, just big. Then another. When the boxes were resting side-by-side, Spahn opened them. The lids stayed up on hinges.

Dixie turned her back to the metal wall, stood still as she could. Felt the big booms of her heart and wondered if the people inside could hear them too. If that wasn't Bill Overlake's Jeep, and Bill and Margie, Maggie, shit, Mrs. Overlake inside those boxes, then what? Who?

Suddenly an argument erupted inside the terminal. Voices loud, then louder. Dixie could hear Spahn talking over them. "A terrible accident is still an accident," he said, but one of the women yelled that right and wrong mean something too.

Voices she could not identify:

"We should have left them out there."

"We sure as hell can't take them back!"

"The DoD will cover us if we come clean."

"I will not spend the rest of my life in prison."

Then Spahn again in a booming voice: "This is the cost of freedom! There are always mistakes in science. You know this. We all came here with our eyes open."

The argument ended as suddenly as it had begun. An eerie silence. Dixie risked a peek inside and saw almost exactly what she had imagined seeing: the eight AlphaNeutronica employees standing in a semicircle around the two open boxes, heads bowed at this strange service.

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She clocked back in from her break, saw that she'd overstayed the allotted 30 minutes by six minutes and 18 seconds. She unhooked Orwell, knelt and stroked his fine heavy head. She felt like she was in a dream she could not escape

from. Everything familiar but everything changed, everything wrong.

Back in the surveillance theater Dixie put on her black cardigan against the aggressive AC, then sat heavily in her wheeled task chair. Orwell collapsed with a *humpf*. Her monitors had come back to life and she watched the black night on them. Third tier, second from left: kangaroo rat. Bottom tier, third from right: owl. She was too distracted to even care about her human Majestic friends, oblivious as they were to her.

Her shift would end at six A.M. and wild horses couldn't drag her from duty before that appointed hour. Her duty was her life. So she sat there, replaying every second, every frame of the past hours. She believed that Spahn was smart, and the others were smart too, and that they would find a way to destroy the evidence of their accidental homicides. Of a policeman and his wife. Nice couple. She believed the DoD and CIA would probably move heaven and earth to protect their interests here, their programs, their people. As would James Vermange, billionaire recluse owner of AlphaNeutronica, the world's largest purveyor of drones and strategic nuclear missiles. As would the president, if the president knew.

And as for her, hulking Dixie Willoughby, grade-three surveillance analyst offering her devotion and her life to this Republic?

Who was she to defy them?

Why should she defy them?

And if she were to defy them, how?

• • •

She finished her shift, collected Orwell and punched out. Waved to Nelson and Weber. She drove the private road ahead of the soon-incoming day shift, which started at 7:30. She passed the village for AlphaNeutronica employees, a sun-blached little hamlet of modular homes that smacked of military-base housing. Small market and stores. High prices. A park with swings for the kids. Scaled-back "express" fast-food franchises. The employees who lived there called themselves AlphaNeurotics and their home Neurotica Acres. Dixie's address was 12 Sam Colt Drive.

She drove past Neurotica Acres, took the highway north into the hills where she liked to hike and hunt rocks with Orwell. It was sere and forbidding land, wind-contoured boulders and sharp, shivering plants, but it was beautiful too, especially at sunrise, like now, and at sunset.

She walked slowly because Orwell was no longer young, and the early-morning temperature was already in the high 70s. And because she, Dixie, though 28, no longer felt young, as of last night.

As she crunched along, Dixie thought of Majestic's 378 human citizens she had secretly observed for the last two-plus years. None of them yet suspected they were human lab rats, so expertly hidden were the tiny interior

cameras and so utterly silent the AUAV observations made from far above. She was quite fond of most of her people, in spite of their faults. She wanted what was best for them and often spent her long graveyard surveillance hours imagining what she would do for certain Majesticans who just needed a little help. Such as Lance, the mentally retarded teenager who ran off into the desert for days at a time, collecting odd objects to bring back home to his disabled war-vet father. What about a better pair of boots for him? And a new TV for Cathy, the ancient, lonely baseball fan whose television was failing. There was Bethany, the cute blackjack dealer who commuted all the way to Las Vegas and most nights cried herself to sleep in her faded yellow trailer. A tough case, that one. And others. In a way, she loved them. It was an invisible, noninvasive, impersonal love, but didn't that count?

She had no siblings and no friends, really, except her very preoccupied UCI Med Center parents—Dr. Mom in Neurosciences and Dr. Dad in Hematology. Some distant cousins back east, God knew where. People in general annoyed and disappointed her. Men so self-obsessed and women so angry yet desperate. She just felt too big and clumsy and conspicuous. Hulking. She had Orwell, her job and her modular home in Neurotica Acres—and that was about it.

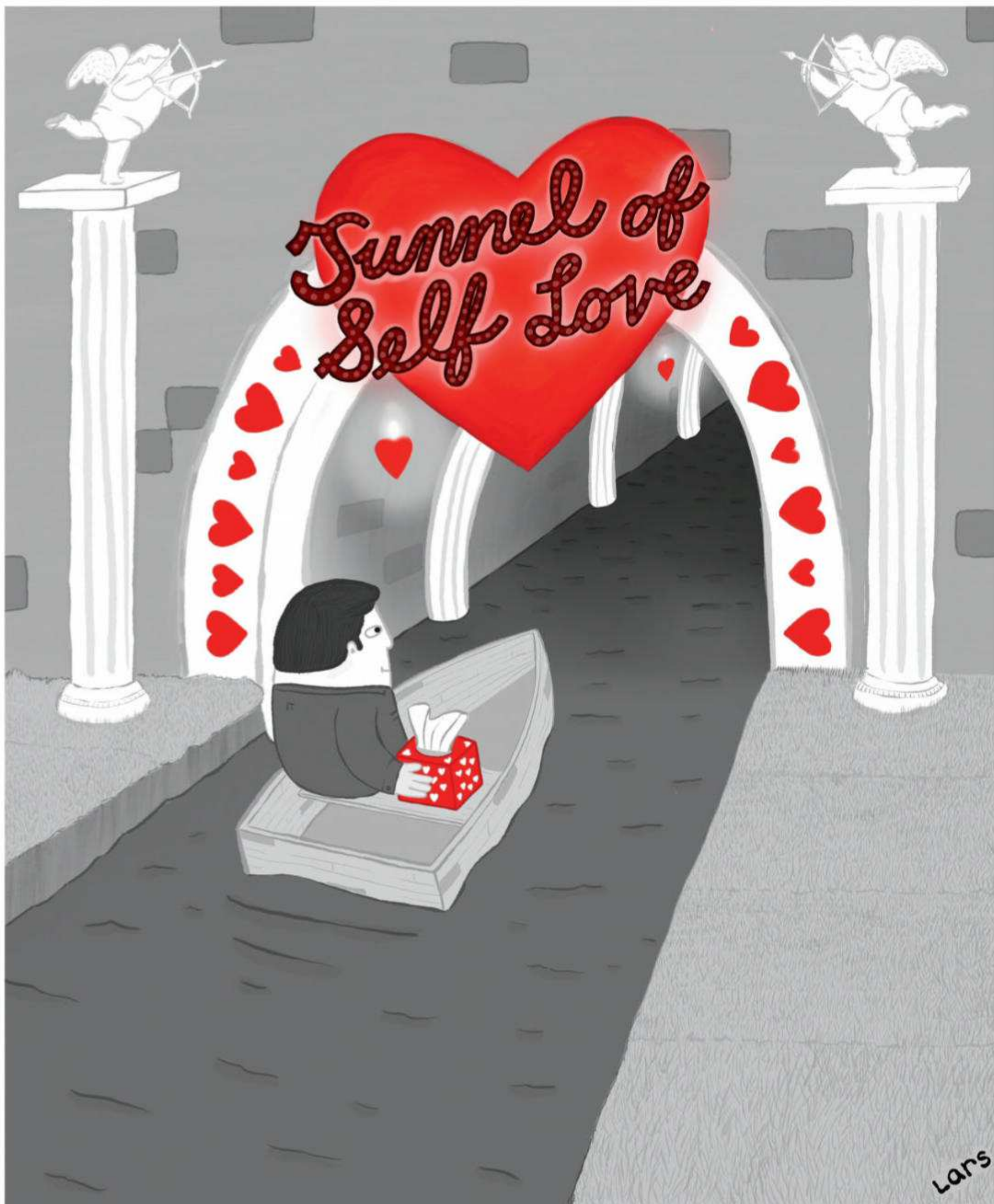
She sat on a smooth rock and let the rising sun heat her face. Closed her eyes and conjured to mind every time she'd seen, in person, gentle Bill Overlake and his sweet wife—name of Margo, thank you—and how they'd seemed like two parts of the same animal. She'd seen them in reality only a few times. Said hello once outside the Roadrunner Café, once in the Red Face Trading Post. Waved from her car at them, pulling out of the gas station. She'd observed them undetected in their own home, of course, a hundred times or more—kitchen, living room, bedroom. Never watched them in intimate, hygiene or potty moments. Ever.

For some reason—well, she knew exactly what the damned reason was—those memories of the Overlakes hurt her now, deeply. Because she knew the Overlakes would never, ever be alive together again. However, the scalding truth was: When she'd had the chance, just what had she offered them, these newcomers to this vast and hostile land? Two hellos and a wave in passing? Secret surveillance? A faulty prototype weapon to blow them off the face of the earth while they stargazed?

She opened her eyes. Orwell had found the shady side of her rock and lay on his side.

Dixie got out her phone and powered it up and found her voice recorder app.

"My name is Dixie Willoughby," she began. "I am a grade-three surveillance analyst at AlphaNeutronica. Something happened last night at our R&D compound out by Majestic. Everything I'm about to tell you is true." ■



Lars

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

You're never too young to wax nostalgic for holidays past—or too old to wish for the season's defining trends. This year we celebrate the best of both worlds with a gift guide that showcases how well the classics (Brando-esque moto jackets) mesh with innovation (sex toys on demand)



BIT PLAYERS

FEEL THE FUTURE

A PlayStation VR bundle adds virtual-reality technology to the PS4, turning it from a gaming console to a gateway into immersive adventures and heart-pounding battles. PlayStation VR, from \$299, playstation.com

REPEAT THE PAST

Remember *Boulder Dash*, *California Games* and *Paradroid*? Revisit the video games of the 1980s with this scaled-down replica of the Commodore 64. C64 Mini retro gaming console, \$80, gamestop.com



SOUND MINDS

GET UP AND GO

V-Moda's latest wireless headphones look impressively modern, but audiophiles will appreciate them for their utility: Bluetooth pairing and a 14-hour-plus battery life ensure you're covered during long trips, whether by land or air. *V-Moda Crossfade 2 wireless headphones*, \$200, v-moda.com

THORENS AND CHILL

Who needs a wood-burning fireplace when you can curl up with a loved one in front of a Thorens record player? This traditional wood model is a high-performance beauty. Dig out your favorite vinyl (we recommend Jorja Smith's *Lost & Found*) and bask in the ageless warmth of analog sound. *Thorens TD 240-2*, \$1,099, thorens.com



STYLE ICONS

TRADE UP FOR NEW KICKS

Virgil Abloh is disrupting the fashion world as artistic director of Louis Vuitton menswear and founder of his own streetwear line, Off-White. This high-top is just one example of how his designs define what's next. *Off-White "Off-Court" 3.0 sneakers, \$610, off---white.com*

INVEST IN BLACK GOLD

Trends come and go, but the black motorcycle jacket rides on, timeless and iconic. Saint Laurent's version is 100 percent lambskin, which means it's softer, smoother and longer-lasting than standard leather. *Saint Laurent motorcycle jacket, \$4,990, ysl.com*



SEX OBJECTS

DISCRETION ON DEMAND

Launched just this year, Maude is a mail-order sex-essentials company devoted to presentation, production and personalization. Its latex condoms are 100 percent natural, the signature lubricant is organic, and its vibrator is soft silicone. All products are delivered in simple, sleek packaging, with monthly subscription plans in the works. *Maude kit 7, \$82, getmaude.com*

LEARN THE ROPES

The sacred art of bondage has supplied orgasms for centuries, and this suede whip, silk cuffs and pleasure beads set from LELO, one of the most exciting sex-toy brands out there, promises any couple a kinky good time. *LELO Dare Me Pleasure Set, \$199, lelo.com*





HIGH NOTES

UP YOUR CONCENTRATION

As cannabis laws ease nationwide, companies are developing new high-tech and sophisticated ways to get stoned. The Peak Smart Rig from Puffco is a sleek vaporizer that works like a dab rig but is quicker and easier to use. *Puffco Peak Smart Rig*, \$380, puffco.com

DOWNPLAY YOUR VICE

Summerland's handmade ceramic bongs look nothing like the ones on college campuses. This is an elevated, grown-up version of old-school paraphernalia with craftsmanship so slick it can double as a bookcase curio. *Summerland Chongo Marble bong*, \$250, welcometosummerland.myshopify.com





PLAYMATE



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KYLE DELEU**

Knockout

From the casting office to the boxing ring, November Playmate **Shelby Rose** is a fighter—one who also likes negronis and *Sex and the City* reruns





Shelby Rose is on a mission. “I want to empower people with curves,” she says. “Specifically that in-between curvy size that’s not really represented. There’s not much praise out there for women who are the size I am.”

Our November Playmate didn’t always possess this sense of purpose. A native of Orlando, Florida and one of five siblings raised in a conservative Christian household, Shelby began modeling at the age of 18. Having relocated to New York City, she spent two years bouncing from job to job in England, Italy, Switzerland and Germany—all the while maintaining her studies at Miami Dade College, which granted

her a degree in public relations. But she reached a sharp turning point during a stint in China, where she found herself forcing her body to be thinner than it should be—a reaction, she says, to agents calling her fat every day.

Now she’s back in New York, finally and fully embracing her physique. “You’ve got to have a good image about yourself,” she says. “Probably not as many girls will pose nude because they feel they’re too voluptuous. If you have curves, flaunt them. Enjoy them!”

Shelby acknowledges that her decision to pose for PLAYBOY may come as a shock to people who know her back home. “But I don’t really

care!” she says. “I’m open. I like to try things. I’m not one of those people who are like, ‘I’m just going to sit in my square little life.’”

These days, Shelby is anything but penned in. In addition to modeling, she’s putting her degree to use, running the social media account for a skin-care line. And she has discovered another passion of late: “I feel my strongest and sexiest when I’m boxing.” It comes as no surprise that strength and sexiness are synonymous for this fierce, magnetic young woman: “You can’t always be the polished girl,” she says. “You’d better bring out the sexy. *Own* it.” ■













"Mrs. Watson, come here. STOP.
I want to see you. STOP. What
are you wearing? STOP."



The Historic First Sext







DATA SHEET



BIRTHPLACE: Orlando, Florida **CURRENT CITY:** New York, New York

RINSE AND REPEAT

Honestly, I don't like to spend much time getting ready. I'll put a rerun of *Desperate Housewives* or *Sex and the City* on my iPad and set it right in front of me so I can do my hair. I have a lot of hair!

HOUSE PARTY

I'm into deep house—Solomun and Jamie Jones. It's my going-out music. I'll go to a rave in Brooklyn, like, once a month.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

I've never dated an American guy. I always find other backgrounds interesting; I tend to look for someone who's from somewhere else. I've always been attracted to what's different.

MOTIVATE ME

I look for success—that's the first thing. I know it sounds bougie, but

I've always been attracted to success because it's usually indicative of a type-A personality. I don't really like people who are relaxed, which is weird because I'm very relaxed. I'm attracted to drive: OCD types, morning people.

MATTERS OF TASTE

I'm very open to food. I like escargots. I like weird shit other people won't eat. When it comes to drinks, I love mezcal, and I like a negroni.

STYLE COUNSEL

I love to wear bodysuits. I'm also really into bags and shoes—they're my weakness. I don't necessarily get excited for winter, but I'm obsessed with winter jackets. And I love vintage fur.

GOSSIP GIRL

A perfect day would start with boxing in the morning so I'd feel

productive. Then I'd meet my girlfriends for lunch at Cipriani and go shopping and just gossip. Oh, and I like day-drinking.

THE BIG CHILL

I'm very social, but now I also like to just chill. I feel like the city is so aggressive; I like to relax and then maybe have one or two nights once in a while when I just go crazy.

ADVENTURE TIME

I really want to go to Cape Town this year. That's my dream spot. Safaris, vineyards, penguins on the beach...and I like the accent.

PUT UP YOUR DUKES

I go to a gym called Church Street Boxing, and it's literally all men. At first I was like, What am I doing? But now I'm at the point where I want to compete.

Shelly Rose

@_shelbyro





PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES



Football season is here!" booms a man as he enters a sports bar.

The bartender chuckles. "Here to watch the game, friend?"

"Game? I just like having an excuse to binge-drink four out of seven days. Speaking of which, what sports play on Tuesdays and Wednesdays?"

One in five men surveyed say they enjoy prostate stimulation as part of their sexual repertoire. Of the others, three are currently googling "prostate stimulation diagram," and one is a liar.

It's Thanksgiving and a suburban family is going around the table, telling one another what they're thankful for.

"I'm thankful for the turkey," says eight-year-old Bobby.

"That's nice," says his uncle Roy. "Is that your favorite food?"

"No. I just like that it puts you assholes to sleep."

A few weeks later, that same kid is sitting on Santa's lap at a local department store.

"What do you want for Christmas, young man?" Santa asks.

"Well, I don't really want any presents," Bobby says.

"No presents!" says Santa, frowning. "Then what *do* you want?"

"For you to quit judging me the whole goddamn year."

In a recent survey, 94 percent of respondents said they'd like to have sex in an airplane. In related news: *Don't touch any surface in an airplane.*

Fun fact: Astroglide was invented by a NASA scientist, presumably to help astronauts get into their spacesuits. Seriously, guys—couldn't you have bought them flowers and put on a groovy record instead?

Irish coffee: because why put off day-drinking till the afternoon?

A woman and her dim-witted husband are relaxing and reading the newspaper one Sunday morning.

"Sad, isn't it," says the woman. "According to this, most people check their phones immediately after they have sex."

"Jeez," the husband says, looking up in alarm. "Why are people letting their phones have sex?"

Getting coal in your stocking means you've been bad, but getting "clean-burning coal" in your stocking means an American industry is thriving!

Two women are watching some kids make a snowman in a neighbor's yard.

"I wish my husband was a snowman," says one.

"Why, so you could dress him up and change him into exactly what you want him to be?"

"No," the first woman replies. "I just want him to disappear when the weather gets nicer."

In the near future, we're all going to have lifelike sex robots, which means we're also going to have sex-robot tech support. So if you thought getting talked through finding "the button" during sex put a damper on things, imagine getting a verbal tour of your cybernetic honey from the office IT guy.

Whenver you're feeling bad about yourself, just remember there are people who argue with one another in the comments section of porn videos.



Three words, Mr. President: pumpkin space latte.





20Q

CHARLIE COX

In a world where Marvel is king and privacy all but dead, the man behind Daredevil tells us why it's important to remain, if just for now, masked

Q1: *Do you find it's a struggle to be on a popular Marvel show and at the same time try to maintain your private life?*

COX: I think I've managed to keep my private life very private. That wasn't born out of any intense feelings toward privacy, though I think it's quite normal and natural to want to be able to have a private life. I think it's partly due to the fact that I don't engage in social media. I also don't think I entirely trust myself with social media. I wouldn't want to have a bad day and end up tweeting something without having really thought it through. You can't take that back.

Q2: *What else don't you like about social media?*

COX: It's just not in my DNA. Occasionally someone will show me Ryan Reynolds's handle. He maintains his privacy, but he's very funny, and he says some interesting stuff. I guess he kind of gets it right; he knows exactly how to manage it. I read an interview years ago—I think it was with Matt Damon, who said that he doesn't like doing interviews. He tries to do as few interviews as pos-

sible, because he doesn't really want people to get to know who he is as a person; it might make it harder for them to believe him as his character. I remember thinking, That's a really good point.

Q3: *You've worked with some superb actors over the years—women in particular, including Claire Danes, Kate Mara and Krysten Ritter. Have you ever fallen in love with a co-star?*

COX: Yeah, many times.

Q4: *Can you tell us about that?*

COX: No! *[laughs]* Look, that was probably one of the humbling experiences of my 20s—beautiful actresses I'd fallen in love with. Spend enough time googling me and you'll probably find a list of a few of them.

Q5: *Is it complicated to be involved with someone who is also an actor on-set with you?*

COX: Yes. You're in some weird location where you don't know anyone else. You're all there, you're making this movie, and if you're co-stars, you're pretending to be in love during the day. It's not surprising that people confuse reality. Often, I think, when you do have

these on-set romances and then you get back to the real world, suddenly you begin to see it wasn't quite what you thought it was. I think that's why you get so many actors dating one another: It's nice to be with somebody who understands what the job is like.

Q6: *Your fiancée, Samantha Thomas, is a producer on Iron Fist and Jessica Jones but not Daredevil. How did you guys meet?*

COX: Yeah, so she's a producer. I'm not going to talk about her at all, because one thing I'm very careful about is keeping my family out of it. That's one of the reasons I'm not on social media. I really don't think people need to know about my family.

Q7: *We're not going to ask about your sex life, because you're not going to tell us. So what's something no one has ever asked you that you wish people would?*

COX: I don't know if I've ever heard that question before. The truth is, for someone like me, I don't feel comfortable talking about myself in any way that's going to then be put on camera or in print or something. But I recognize

BY **MEREDITH ALLOWAY** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JAKE CHESSUM**





MAYBE IT'S BEING ENGLISH, BUT I BECOME HORRIFIED BY A COMPLIMENT.

that part of my job is to publicize the stuff that I do. I also know that no one is going to read an interview where all I talk about is what it was like to play the character. It's a balance, and you have to try to figure out what is appropriate and what isn't.

Q8: *Do you imagine sacrificing your career for your family?*

COX: Oh, 100 percent. My career is not more important than my family. No, there's nothing more important than family. Go to any hospital or old people's home and find me someone who will answer the question "What would you do differently?" with "I wish I'd worked harder." No. Everyone would say, "I wish I'd made more time for my family."

Q9: *What were you like as a kid?*

COX: I'm the youngest of five by 10 years; the closest sibling to me is 10 years older. So I'm a total mistake, effectively. I was an only child and I wasn't, if that makes sense. My dad was a publisher and my mom worked for him, in London. I was obsessed with sport—football.

Q10: *Which team do you root for?*

COX: I'm an Arsenal fan. There's a great line in one of my favorite films, an Argentinean film called *The Secret in Their Eyes*. They're looking for a criminal and they say something like "When you're on the run, you can change everything about you. You can change your look, you can change the way you live, you can change the people you hang out with, you can change anything you need to. The one thing you can never change is your passions." And they end up finding this guy because they look for him at his football team's stadium. You can't choose what you're passionate about. Sometimes I think, How am I wasting this time and energy and suffering these devastating losses that ruin days—over a game?







But you just can't help it. For my bachelor party, my best friend was like, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I just want to go to the park with my best mates, put sweaters down and play."

Q11: *If you were obsessed with sports when you were growing up, when did your artistic side come out?*

COX: If I think about it, it was always there. I always enjoyed engaging in the theater. We did a play at one of my schools when I was seven or eight years old. It was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and I played Charlie. I don't know if we've lost the tape, but if you watch it, as well as knowing my own lines, I'm mouthing everyone else's lines.

Q12: *Many people say your breakout role was in Stardust, but we remember you in Casanova with Heath Ledger, which came before Stardust, right?*

COX: Yeah, but I don't think anyone would refer to that as a breakout role. [laughs] What you don't even remember is that I did a Shakespeare movie, *The Merchant of Venice*, with Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons before that. I'll tell you something: In the first part of the movie, we were all in Luxembourg, and Pacino—I can't remember how he phrased it, but he said to me, "Do you have a leather jacket?" And I was like, "No." He was like, "If you're an actor, you have to have a leather jacket." Later, my mom and dad asked me, "What do you want for Christmas?" And I said, "A leather jacket." I still have it. A bunch of my friends are still really jealous of it.

Q13: *And who are your friends? Who do you hang out with?*

COX: My dear, dear, dear friends aren't actors. My dear friends are my friends from school. The guy who is going to be my best man, my best friend—our parents were friends before we were born. I've become friends with people like Eddie Redmayne, but you know, I don't see them regularly at all. They're out doing something, or I'm doing something. Ben Barnes is in *Stardust*, so we met on that. He's one of the loveliest humans I've ever met—and he's also been in my life a huge amount because he's now on one of the Netflix shows that shoot in New York. I found him an apartment in my building, because he lives in Los Angeles. So for two years, he's been living underneath us.

Q14: *What was it like working with Krysten Ritter on The Defenders?*

COX: I love Krysten. I can't say enough good things about her. And she and I, in particular, got along really well. She's unapologetically

who she is, and I learned a lot from that. Not in any way does she apologize for being successful and talented.

Q15: *Do you apologize for those things?*

COX: I think I do. Maybe it's being English, but I become horrified by a compliment. You know that feeling when someone says something wonderful to you—"Oh my God, you're great," or something like that? My instinct is to say, "No, I'm not." It's very difficult for me. I think I was brought up to not be boastful or a show-off, and what I'm learning from people like Krysten is that being authentic and being proud of who you are and what you do is not the same thing as being boastful. So one of my practices as a human is to try and be right-sized, if that makes sense.

Q16: *Is it difficult dealing with fans at conven-*

VULNERABILITY, FORGIVENESS AND KINDNESS SHOULD BE WHAT MAKE A SUPERHERO A SUPERHERO.

tions like Comic-Con, knowing that compliments make you uncomfortable?

COX: I have to say, one of the great things about playing this character is that I've had the opportunity to go to loads of conventions and meet loads of fans, and I love that. The fans are so respectful. I haven't had a bad experience to date. You get to hear what people have to say about the show—people who have no agenda in telling you that they like something. And again, I still manage to lead a very private life. In my day-to-day life I seem to be anonymous.

Q17: *The new season of Daredevil keeps getting darker and darker. There are a lot of rumors about the Born Again Daredevil story arcs for the coming seasons. How do you feel about playing Daredevil in an arc that compares him to Jesus?*

COX: I guess what your question makes me think of is that this character has his faith: He has a very strong attachment to his God, to his Catholicism. And yet what he engages in as a superhero runs in direct conflict with those ideas. One of the great gifts of playing this character is to enjoy that feeling of being torn in different directions. We play on the idea that the character gives up the Matt Murdock element of his life and starts to engage with the idea that it's make-believe—that Matt Murdock is the character he's invented, and the true him, his true authentic self, is Daredevil, which is a dangerous path to tread.

Q18: *Do you ever feel as though you're losing yourself in the role?*

COX: No. I know that Sam jokes about when she has to live with Matt Murdock for six months.

I know that it can affect your moods, but some of that is because of fatigue and your body aching 24/7. I've played this character for so many hours now—it's not like a movie.

Q19: *Daredevil seems to be a very vulnerable character. Do you consider yourself to be a vulnerable person?*

COX: The short answer is yes. The truth is in real life, in my heart—and this may sound naive—but I don't believe violence is the answer to anything. I don't think there needs to be, or should be in an ideal world, any level of violence to try to solve any problems. One of the things you commented on, which we try to do with the show and I try to do with Matt, is really highlight the moments when the answer is not violence but vulnerability, forgiveness and kindness—characteristics that really, ultimately, hopefully should be what make a superhero a superhero. What makes a superhero is the ability to make the right judgment call in the right moment, the ability to not engage in violence when it's not absolutely necessary.

Q20: *In what ways do you think playing Daredevil has changed you?*

COX: One of the things I like about Matt Murdock is that he doesn't worry about what other people think. He doesn't feel people's feelings for them. He's very comfortable telling them exactly how it is, and he lets other people have their own feelings around it. And that's something that, at times, makes him seem quite cold. But actually, a very respectful way to live is to not try to influence how people experience a conversation or a challenging difference you might have. I'm trying to take that onboard a little bit as myself, as Charlie—to speak my truth and let people have their experience around that. ■



In the Shadow of the Mountains

Emblematic of rugged individualism, the American West today endures shockingly high suicide rates—a situation one Colorado program aims to address

BY **CHRIS POMORSKI**



Telluride, Colorado is a postcard-perfect ski town of some 2,500 residents who have an alarmingly common habit of dying by suicide. It's a tendency they share with inhabitants of other Western ski areas—Aspen; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Sun Valley, Idaho—and, more broadly, with people in the Mountain West, that vaguely top-hat-shape cluster including Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Colorado and Nevada. By some estimates—and for reasons that remain largely mysterious—it has been the most suicidal region of the country for more than 100 years, or roughly since white migrants settled there in earnest.

Telluride lies in the southwest corner of the state, in a box canyon hemmed in by 13,000-foot Rocky Mountain peaks. Until the Rio Grande Southern Railroad arrived in the early 1890s, its isolation was acute. Between 1890 and 1895, a gold boom more than tripled the population. Financiers such as John D. Rockefeller and Harry Whitney poured in capital. But the worm soon turned. A brutal labor conflict—and gold discoveries elsewhere—sapped Telluride's allure. By 1970 fewer than 600 people lived there.

Around 1975 three friends, high school seniors, began making regular trips to Telluride from Tucson, where they lived. Tom Slocum was a soft-spoken tennis star with blond hair, blue eyes and a subtle wit. Slocum had been friends with Tony Daranyi since middle school, when Daranyi's family moved to the Southwest from Peru. Bradley Steele made the trips possible—his parents had recently built a house in Telluride. The drive from Tucson took about 11 hours. En route they listened to Led Zeppelin, Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Who, tracing back roads through tribal lands of the Hopi, Navajo and Ute.

Telluride offered attractive seclusion. A few prospectors remained, but the old miners' cabins were largely occupied by countercultural types: hippies, bikers, outdoorsy hermits, druggy trustafarians. Only Main Street was paved. "Few people had heard of it," Daranyi says. "When you arrived, you felt like you'd discovered a paradise." The friends backpacked, rafted, climbed and skied. The community was warm, welcoming and inspiring. Daranyi and Slocum made a pact to return for good as adults.

Around 1985, when they were in their mid-20s, they followed through. Slocum had been working at a golf shop in Los Angeles, Daranyi as an investment banker in Chicago. To recalibrate their bearings—to leave the "real world" behind—they spent time

trekking on mountain bikes and camping in the desert. "Investment banking was a real dog-eat-dog existence," Daranyi recalls. "I had to heal myself, purge the demons. We used to say we were dropping out but dropping in. Dropping out of society but dropping into something much more special."

Soon they were sharing a rented house with Laurel Robinson, an ex-stockbroker originally from Atlanta, and a man named Marv Kirk, a math teacher of unassuming brilliance who could single-handedly defeat teams of 10 at Trivial Pursuit. They found work at a weekly paper—Slocum in the ad department, Daranyi as a reporter—rare white-collar jobs in a catch-as-catch-can economy dominated by restaurant and construction gigs. Although Telluride's new residents differed in many ways from the miners they'd replaced, they shared with them a frontier spirit—a sense of having come from elsewhere, often a great distance, forgoing physical comforts for earthier purposes.

"It was 800 people climbing, skiing, running rivers, playing cards and passing the same 20-dollar bill around," says Lance Waring, a friend of Slocum's and Daranyi's who moved to Telluride around the same time. Todd Creel, another friend, adds, "There was no class system. Everyone was here for the same reason." Potlucks, costume parties, ski burns—ceremonial pyres lit to call down snow—and liberal drug use defined the era. "My rent was \$100 a month," Waring says. "The economics allowed you the luxury of making a tremendous connection with the community."

Among a cohort of explorers and free spirits, many of whom passed up family life in favor of adventure, Slocum stood out for his

self-containment. He spent whole summers alone, camping out of his car. "He wanted to keep his life really simple," Daranyi says. "Fishing and camping on his way to go golfing would be his idea of a perfect weekend." After two of Slocum's brothers died—one a victim of AIDS, the other of a car accident—he didn't much discuss the events. In the early 2000s, friends were surprised when Slocum moved in with a girlfriend in Rico, about a 40-minute drive from Telluride. At Creel's weekly poker games—where Slocum was a regular, reading opponents skillfully and folding often—he acquired a new nickname: Loverboy. "He was glowing," Creel recalls. But the relationship ended, and Slocum returned to Telluride, eventually occupying a caretaker's apartment owned by a friend. The town had become glitzy and high-priced, and many in his circle had left. In the following years he withdrew from those who remained, drinking beer alone in his apartment. His legs bothered him, making him less able to participate in the adventure sports he loved. One morning in February 2016, when he was 57, he hiked to a picturesque spot above town, sat down and shot himself in the head.

Slocum was one of six people to kill themselves that year in San Miguel County, where Telluride is by far the most populous community, making suicide responsible for nearly a quarter of the county's 25 deaths in 2016. When I visit Emil Sante, the county coroner since 2011, at his Telluride home in August, he is mourning Jim Guest, who took his own life in July at the age of 73. A charter member of Telluride's ski patrol, Guest had been locally beloved. His suicide—the county's third in 2018—shook the town. As we sit on Sante's deck, he reviews the explanations often offered for the Mountain West's suicide problem: a cult of rugged individualism coupled with limited mental health services, the increased cost of living that has attended the development of luxury resorts, geographic isolation, changes to brain chemistry brought on by high altitudes. But Sante rejects such neat formulas.

"There is something to it," he says. "I just don't know what it is."

...

The rate at which Americans end their own lives increased nearly 30 percent between 1999 and 2016, according to a June 2018 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The data break down along familiar lines, with Native American men aged 25 to 44 and white men aged 45 to 64 accounting for the highest



Tony Daranyi at his Norwood, Colorado farm.



rates of self-inflicted death. But suicide among women increased dramatically too. It's the nation's 10th-leading cause of death, one of just three—alongside unintentional injuries and Alzheimer's—that are increasing. In 2016 nearly 45,000 Americans took their own lives, and the recent suicides of prominent figures—Robin Williams, Anthony Bourdain, Kate Spade—have drawn public attention to the issue.

The motivations for suicide represent a notoriously unnavigable archipelago of personal turmoil, ambient ills and opaque logic. Experts caution against attributing a suicide—let alone thousands of them—to any one cause. Yet in the U.S., suicide has long been framed primarily as a mental health issue. Literature on the subject often proceeds from the assumption that some 90 percent of suicide victims can be shown, based on psychological autopsy studies, to have suffered from mental illness. We have thus understood suicide largely as the desperate recourse of unsound minds, and prevention efforts focus overwhelmingly on mental health, often emphasizing crisis intervention: hot-lines, tips on recognizing distress, how to talk to a suicidal friend.

Against that backdrop, it's striking that the CDC study cautions that “approximately half of suicide decedents...did not have a known mental health condition.” America, the report urges, needs a radically more diversified, public-health-based approach to suicide prevention. But in addition to discrete goals with self-evident relevance to suicide—reducing substance abuse and access to guns, increasing access to counseling—the CDC prescribes complex, politically sensitive initiatives that span urban planning, education and civic engagement: “strengthening economic supports (e.g., housing stabilization policies, household financial support); teaching coping and problem-solving skills to manage everyday stressors and prevent future relationship problems...promoting social connectedness to increase a sense of belonging and access to informational, tangible, emotional and social support.”

Experts emphasize that among suicidal thinkers, external factors tend to overlap with mental health struggles. Christine Moutier, the chief medical officer at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, tells me, “People who are in a state of well mental health don't think about ending their life.” But it's difficult not to notice that the CDC report suggests a substantial reknitting of the social fabric,

positioning the rise in suicide less as a distinct disease than as a symptom of deep, widespread ruptures in American life.

Although suicide rates increased in virtually every state from 1999 to 2016, the effects aren't uniformly distributed. The Mountain West stands out for especially dire statistics—much of the region experienced rate increases of 38 to 58 percent. With around 290 deaths annually, Montana has the nation's highest rate of suicide.

Colorado, however, tallies the most yearly suicide deaths in the region, making it an ideal testing ground for a fresh approach to prevention. In 2015 it was selected for a CDC-funded program tasked with creating a comprehensive framework for “upstream” prevention, addressing populations in which “no suicidal thinking or behaviors may be apparent.” The strategy mimics those for heart-attack and

A 2017 study raises the possibility of a Mountain West “culture of suicide.”

cancer prevention, which begin well before the onset of disease. Based in Colorado's Office of Suicide Prevention, the program coordinates players including universities, businesses, courts, mental health organizations and public agencies, and aims to reduce suicide 20 percent statewide by 2024.

It now operates in six pilot counties, with plans to roll out in Colorado's other 58 counties; a statewide model could be exported further afield. It's unclear what that model will be; contributing factors vary considerably more for suicide than for cardiac arrest. But it might include things like community-building 5Ks and park cleanups, affordable-housing advocacy, tracking of indicators including divorce filings and DUIs, and workshops disseminating friendly workplace practices.

Sarah Brummett, director of the OSP, acknowledges that gauging the effects of such a broad initiative will be challenging. Depending on your cast of mind, it may seem quixotic—or grittily ambitious. “A lot of work has to happen before anyone has reached the point of crisis,” Brummett says. “You can't just focus resources on identifying people at risk and getting them to care. There's so much happening at the social and ecological level.”

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In his landmark 1897 study *Suicide*, French sociologist Émile Durkheim famously identifies a species of suicide arising from insufficient social integration—the extent to which individuals coalesce, through mutually reinforcing bonds, into a collaborative society. Inadequate integration, he says, creates excessive individualism and, ultimately, “egoistic suicide.” Durkheim writes, “The more weakened the groups to which [the individual] belongs, the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself.” Master of his destiny, he neither relies on his neighbor nor owes that neighbor anything in return. In a society shaped by such thinking, Durkheim continues, “the incidents of private life which seem the direct inspiration of suicide...are in reality only incidental causes. The individual yields to the slightest shock of circumstance because the state of society has made him a ready prey to suicide.”

Excessive individualism is, of course, an American birthright and a mainstay of Western lore. One can see its influence in regional antipathy toward collective enterprises such as taxes and regulation, and it's easy to imagine how it helped the early loggers, cattlemen and miners who staked claims there with scant community to lean on. Currents persist. A pair of modern articles—one from 2002, in *American Sociological Review*; the other from 2013, in *Sociological Perspectives*—confirm previously documented low levels of social integration in the Mountain West. Noting unusually high rates of residential transience and marital instability, the authors identify the region as ripe for the kind of egoistic suicide Durkheim describes. A 2017 study by Carolyn Pepper, of the University of Wyoming, further raises the possibility of a Mountain West “culture of suicide.” This might result, Pepper writes, from “an attitude that suicide is a relatively acceptable response to adversity,” a belief that it is “relatively normal and perhaps inevitable” or



“a belief that suicide is a demonstration of one’s independence.”

Pepper is now digging more deeply into Western individualism. “When I talk about suicide around Wyoming, people always say to me, ‘It’s that pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality,’” she says. I’ve heard this refrain too, from doctors, advocates and friends of suicide victims. “We have some preliminary data where people in the Mountain West describe their own attitudes and their cultural environment as having more of this rugged individualism compared with other parts of the country,” Pepper says. Her findings suggest that Westerners are less likely than others to express emotion or to seek help for problems, and more prone to view failure to overcome obstacles without aid as a sign of weakness.

During our conversation, Pepper notes that the current national suicide rate, 13.4 per 100,000 people, is not a historic high: In the early 1930s, during the Depression, 22 out of every 100,000 Americans killed themselves. Tales of post-crash Wall Street jumpers are familiar. Less known is that suicides had risen steadily throughout the ostensibly roaring prosperity of the 1920s. Rates dropped with the New Deal, then plunged during World War II. “Social disturbances and great popular wars rouse collective sentiments,” Durkheim writes. “As they force men to close ranks and confront the common danger, the individual thinks less of himself and more of the common cause.”

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In 1987 Tony Daranyi married Barclay Smith, an artist and teacher he’d met soon after moving to Telluride. About 10 years later, they both read the cult environmental novel *Ishmael* and were inspired to start an organic farm. They bought land in Norwood, a small rural community about 30 miles from Telluride. At the end of a long driveway off a county road, they built a house of straw bale. They raise poultry, hogs, goats and bees. In the last years of Tom Slocum’s life, Daranyi invited him to parties at the farm, but Slocum always declined. I arrive on a bright, warm August evening. Chicken marengo cooks on the stovetop in a stylishly rustic kitchen. Through a window, Daranyi points to an irrigation pond that is perilously low; the region is enduring perhaps its driest summer on record. The pastures are sere and



San Miguel County, home to Telluride, has seen more than its share of suicides.

fawn. Wildfires throughout the West often haze blue skies, making the air pungent with smoke.

Before dinner, we sit down to talk in a sunny office. Against one wall, shelves hold a diverse collection of books, including several on writing. Daranyi has recently been working on an essay, trying to come to terms with events that threaten his native optimism. “This winter was a bust,” he says, referring to a season of meager snowfall that bruised local businesses. “The water situation. All summer we’ve had smoke-filled skies.” The Mountain West has always relied on nature—for minerals, timber, lift tickets. Amid the region’s vast empty spaces, the vagaries of weather and soil have doubtless helped foster instability. But recent conditions can feel siege-like. “We live politically in a challenging time,” Daranyi says. “The current political agenda and what we’ve been trying to do here are at odds.”

“I’ve had three good friends die this summer,” Daranyi says. Two accidents, one suicide. “Life’s tough. It didn’t used to seem to be.”

Back in August 2016, I had talked with Daranyi by phone about Slocum’s death. Up to a point, their journeys had been closely entwined. Daranyi wondered aloud about what separates resilience from despair: “To lose a friend to suicide leaves you with a lot of questions and soul searching: What path was he headed on? Am I on that path?” There were differences, of course. Daranyi got married and had children. Winters, he works ski patrol—a fraternity of

conscientious jocks that one member describes to me as providing a kind of therapy. After Slocum’s death, Daranyi started listening closely for signs of distress among friends. In addition to being county coroner, Sante, a ski patrol buddy, is chief paramedic for the Telluride fire district; Daranyi does wellness checks for him. For now, even in drought, Daranyi has the farm. I ask if he’s given more thought to how his path differs from Slocum’s. “I don’t have an answer to that question yet,” he says.

I meet Laurel Robinson, Daranyi and Slocum’s former roommate, at her office above a bookstore in Telluride. In good weather, the town is almost comically picturesque. American flags hang from well-kept brick buildings housing galleries, cafés, restaurants and boutiques. The crowd is lively, tan and fit. The Range Rovers drive slowly, and middle-aged men don pink pants without evident self-consciousness. Real estate has been booming more or less since the mid-1980s, and median home values now approach \$1 million. Tom Cruise, Oprah Winfrey and Ralph Lauren have Telluride estates. But beyond Main Street, the houses—handsome, unpretentious, attended by gardeners—are often deserted, the second, third or fourth homes of owners who mostly live elsewhere. Many year-round residents have been exiled to cheaper towns such as Norwood, sometimes an hour or more away.

In a cluttered office outfitted with a Mac monitor, Robinson, executive director of the

annual Telluride Wine Festival, sifts through the fallout from this year's event. The money isn't adding up, and she's fielding peevish complaints. In an earlier era, she says, Telluride's many festivals—largely musical—were facilitated by a culture of volunteerism. Friends and friends of friends would work for tickets. “Now there's no time,” she says. “People have to work so much in order to live here.” For unmoneyed newcomers, the barriers to entry are prohibitive. “People with great aspirations come and think, I'm going to do whatever I need to make it work,” Daranyi says. “And then they think, Oh my God, this is too difficult. It seems like people are coming and going all the time.”

For those who came to Telluride in its undiscovered state, the sense can be of water rising. “That's why I have three jobs,” says Emil Sante, who has lived here for decades. “It weighs on you financially, psychologically.” Todd Creel, who had the good sense to go into real estate early on, says of Slocum, “He was very opinionated about politics and ethics, the environment and Telluride as a community.” Its transformation grated. “The dynamic changed, and the values changed. That was hard for him. It was hard for a lot of people.” When it comes to income disparity, San Miguel is the nation's eighth-most-unequal county, according to a 2018 study by the non-profit Economic Policy Institute. (Wyoming's Teton County and Colorado's Pitkin County rank first and seventh, respectively.) Amid such evolution, friction is inevitable. But unhappiness among the old guard often arises less from class resentment than from the fracture of their community.

After a divorce, Robinson lost her Telluride condo. “I can't buy something else in town,” she says between bites of a late lunch of quiche. “I don't have as many friends, and it's harder to get together with them, because I'm in Norwood. Things pass me by.” Ski burns and potlucks have died out, vestiges of a once tight-knit colony. I ask Robinson about those days. “What's really weird is I'll have these Tom flashbacks,” she says. There was the time she planted a garden. “Tom came out and watched me. He asked all these questions about the flowers, like he'd never been in a yard before. I can see his face so clearly now, whenever I'm planting.” Another time, on a rafting trip, she got doused by rapids, and Slocum warmed her on a riverside rock, warding off hypothermia she hadn't even noticed setting in.

Robinson has known several people who

killed themselves in the area, and she wonders about common threads. “I have contemplated suicide a number of times myself,” she says. “I look at myself and go, What makes me like Tom?” Stereotypes about suicide victims seldom include athletes and outdoorsmen, but people who have staked their identities and relationships on physicality can be unusually vulnerable to the erosions of age.

“People do stuff together around here: tennis, hiking, biking, skiing,” Robinson says. Friendships almost invariably revolve around outdoor activity, and Achilles tendon injuries have lately kept her from participating. “You tend to get separated from your tribe when you can't keep up. And you go, Well, maybe I've got no place in the tribe anymore. It's kind of like in the wild.”

Suicidality, which encompasses everything



Laurel Robinson witnessed Telluride evolve into a resort area.

from suicidal ideation to the completed act, is a continuum—a fact often emphasized by prevention advocates. Suicidal thoughts are common, but few people act on them. Of those who do and survive, a majority do not die by suicide, which is to say they resolve to live. Paul Reich, a program manager with Mental Health Colorado and a vocal advocate for affordable housing, tells me, “Any time you're in a community that has housing that's not stable, it creates a high-stress situation.” Colorado is substantially populated by people from elsewhere who have left friends and family behind. “More than half of Telluride's workers come from outside the county,” Reich says. “You spend your days here, but your nights in, say, Montrose,” which is 65 miles away. “You're not really connected to either of them. There's a lack of a

support network, the connections that help people get through difficult times.”

Yet local suicide prevention remains largely focused on crisis. When I ask Robinson what she thinks about available mental health resources, she looks exasperated. She does not consider suicide by definition irrational; being assured in a moment of crisis that her life is precious doesn't move her. Like all of us, she wants to sense, from her surroundings, that her existence means something. I ask what she does when she feels down. “I call Tony,” she says, chuckling through tears. There's something flintily calming about Daranyi. He has the unhurried manner of a cabinetmaker, and his optimism isn't cloying. He's calling his new essay “The Glass Is Half Full.”

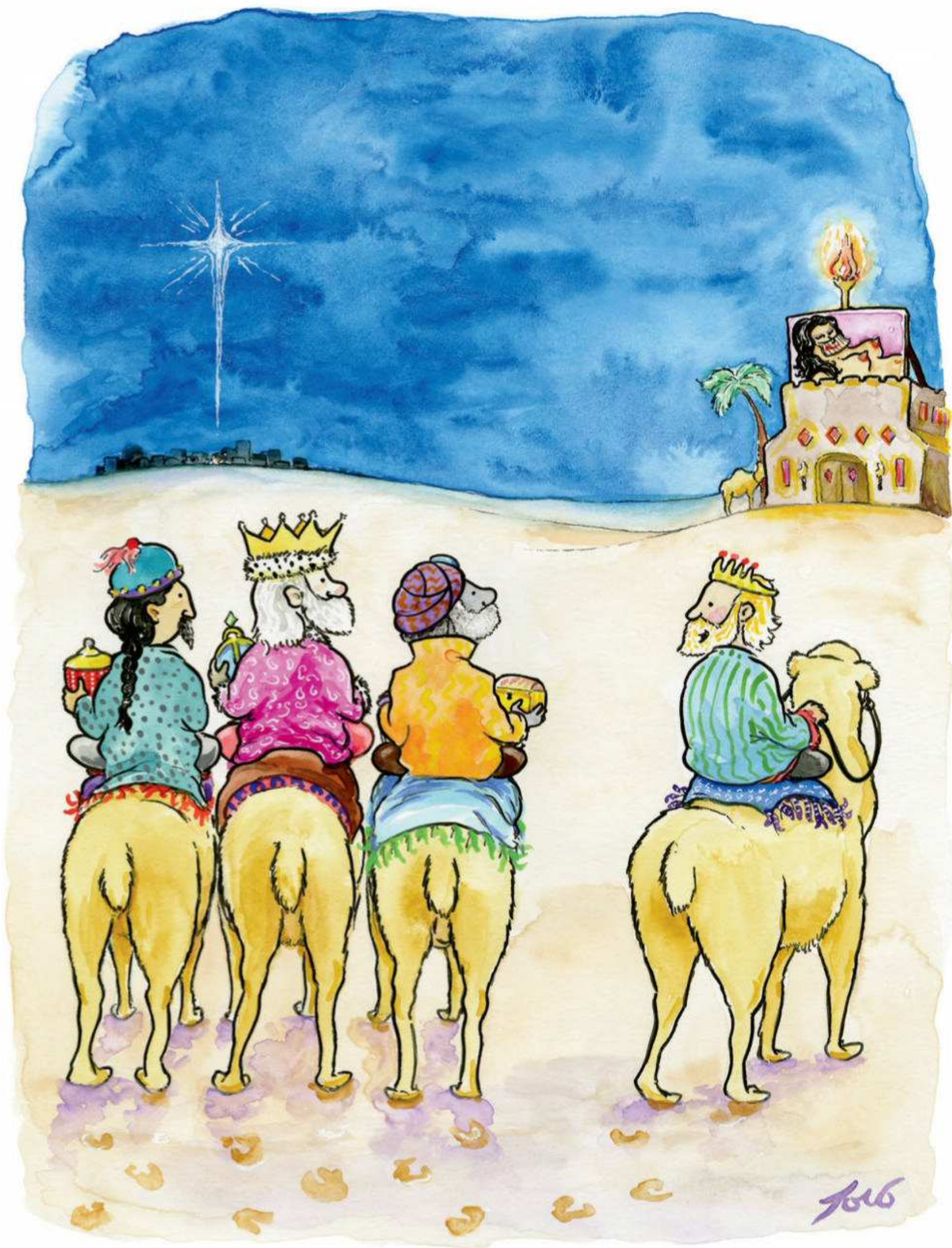
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In a note written before his death, Tom Slocum referred to his physical decline. He indicated he would face his end on his own terms. Like most suicide notes, it offered friends and family no closure.

At the suggestion of Slocum's brother Steve, I look up some of Tom's writing in a local paper, where, over the years, he published several letters and op-ed pieces. What comes through is a man troubled by political partisanship and concerned about his community: back-country protocol, gun control, mountain sports safety.

By April 2015, when he published his last item, he'd become reclusive. Friends say that he'd stopped taking care of himself, his hair gone long and greasy, and that he'd become bitter, unresponsive to overtures even from close friends. But the piece—strange and expansive, proceeding to a dreamy, metaphoric, melancholic denouement—has nothing bitter in it. Slocum describes being on the Colorado, a river he loves, negotiating rapids whose names he knows well. A current of fear, about his own fate and others', ripples the surface; he ponders “an American West where supply of firearms is guaranteed while access to life-giving water seems far less assured.” Conditions are beyond his control. He hopes for the best: “The gorge narrows. The current quickens.... I hope for a confluence of currents in calm, pacific waters as I lever oar blades deep into the murk, feel the forces in play, then I brace for cold, harsh spray from the rapids. And I remind all to stay on the high side of the boat, until she slides up the smooth sandy surface of the beach.”

For help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255 or suicidepreventionlifeline.org.



"I'll catch up with you three later."



Sweater Weather

*Heavy skies and chilly air won't stop
María Fernanda from chasing waterfalls*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **WIISSA**















The FOURTH ARMADA

FICTION BY **MAXIM LOSKUTOFF**

Comes was ordered into the city at night to find a dog.

Fishermen's shacks lined the beach, black against the lighter dark of the sky. In the distance, atop a rise, the long low walls of the Zamorin's palace formed the horizon, punctuated by the leering heads of heathen gods. Comes rowed slowly, fear and dread in his heart. He concentrated on silencing the blades of the oars as they dipped into the water. He'd heard, from the men who survived the first Armada, of the four great halls inside the palace, one each for Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews, and the tall spikes where the Muslim traders were impaled for selling a cow.

He did not wish to think about this, nor the dog, nor the high priest being held prisoner on Admiral da Gama's ship. He longed for the shore to transform into the beach of his home outside Porto, and he to the boy he'd been there not so long ago, swimming in that familiar sea.

But it did not, and nor did he. A single wavering lantern burned faintly to the north. Some wayward fisherman sneaking home through the night with his catch. Comes wished him to hurry; if they met in the street he'd have to kill him. The knife at his belt was heavy; its long curved blade rested against his hip and the center thwart. He'd never killed a man, but he'd watched them die—many now, in these past

eight months of voyage—in many ways. They did not go easily. Each had clung to life far past the suffering Comes thought he could bear.

The half-moon was shrouded by clouds, seeming to lie in the sky like a jewel in a lover's sheets. Its paleness trembled. Before departing, full of the arrogance—and hope—of youth, Comes had thought he'd find a woman on this journey, more exotic and beautiful than any in Portugal. Instead the men buggered each other on the gun deck and raped frightened whores in port. The light shone more brightly off the water than it did above. In this country, where everything was upside down, the men dressed as women and cows

were worshipped as gods. Comes tried to pray to his god, but He felt too distant, as if His eyes were hidden by the curve of the earth, His dominion halved. The peril of this blasphemy wrapped itself around Comes's heart. Da Gama had warned they would be traveling into hell, but Comes had begun to wonder if it was hell they brought with them.

Near the shore, fishing nets came into view, hanging like massive spiderwebs from the porches of the shacks, their glass weights luminous eggs. Comes's fear began to turn to panic. Who knew what roamed these streets? What venomous and outsize creatures, serpents of old or scorpions as big as pigs. Once

ILLUSTRATION BY **JAKE FOREMAN**





in a shop near his home, he'd seen a picture of an elephant looming above its trainer, its massive foot raised as if to crush him.... He forced the panic down his throat, thinking of a cave where he'd often hidden as a boy, listening to the waves crash outside while the other children played. He clutched the oars and guided the skiff to the south, quickening his stroke now that he was in view. It would be worse to be seen here than on land. He imagined a battalion being formed to greet him on the beach, spears and torches raised. He imagined being stripped and dragged through the streets, set down naked on the spike. But he could not return to the *Esmeralda* without a dog, or da Gama would dispatch him in a way worse still.

Sand scraped the bottom of the prow. Comes hunched forward and secured the oars in the rowlocks. The boat wobbled as he stepped out; warm seawater swamped his boots. Palm trees leaned over the sand. The air seemed thick with disease. He cursed softly and dragged the bow above the tide line, grimacing at the grating sound it made. *Take heart*, he told

was like a tongue on his cheek. *You will die here*, it whispered.

Comes unsheathed his knife and held the blade against his thigh. He kept his head low, hoping his dark hair would allay any suspicion from a distance, though once they saw his foreign garb.... He cursed again. Why had he not been given a disguise, at least? He was fodder to da Gama, they all were, to be chewed up and spat aside in pursuit of his destiny. The Admiral of the Seas of Arabia, Persia, India and all the Orient. Chosen son of Portugal, and God.

All Comes wanted was to go home.

The stalls of the fishmongers were shuttered, their scales and salt blocks and ice chests secured within, where the mongers themselves lay sleeping. Comes searched the shadows for dogs. He followed his nose, trying to block out the sharp smell of spices for the familiar ripeness of fish. The tailings and innards must be discarded somewhere. The poorest children of Porto often fought strays for their daily meals. Comes rounded a corner beneath a tree laden with huge, spiky fruit. A red dog lay sleeping on the porch of a larger shack. It was curled into a

would have to be a stray, one that no one would miss, with no territory to defend, that he could befriend somehow.

Keeping to the shadows, he carried on up the street toward the palace. The heads along the wall seemed to stare down at him, and he was seized by a brief, strange impression: What if he'd been born here in Calicut instead of Porto? An Indian, a fisherman like his own father. Would his life have been so different? Would these heathen gods have taken him in, or would they too have flung him loose on the winds of his pride, to some foreign land where he was set upon a terrible task?

Unsettled by these questions, Comes followed his nose. The fish scent intensified. At home, and in every other harbor he'd visited, the smell was strongest on the beach—where the fish were gutted and kept and sold—but here it grew as he walked inland. The shacks around him changed as well, lengthening into warehouses which smelled so strongly his eyes began to water. How could people live in such a stench? All manner of stalls fronted them, and he wondered what the promenade looked like

“YOU ARE A SPY. AND I WILL TEACH YOU YOUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD.”

himself. Nothing had moved. No noise nor commotion disturbed the shacks. Only bats swooping silently through patches of moonlight, and a single gray thread of smoke rising from a distant temple. He tied off to the nearest trunk. Two coconuts were snuggled like testicles high beneath the fronds. He adjusted his own under his tunic—perhaps they still held some luck—and crept up the beach to the end of the mud-packed road.

When he met the hard surface, he swayed and nearly fell. A month had passed since he'd stood on solid land. In Sofala, where all hands had been needed to load the plundered tribute aboard, the dismembered bodies of the Kilwa sultan's retinue still dangling from the masts, their eyeless and noseless faces imploring. Comes stood still and waited for the dizziness to pass. Why had da Gama sent him on this mission, of all the 720 remaining men? Did he see something in him, some potential? Was it a test? Or was there some insolence on his face that he wanted to break? Mosquitoes whined around Comes's neck. The dense tropical heat

ball, its tail tucked beneath its chin, breathing evenly, its smooth coat shining like an ember. Comes gripped the knife. He wasn't sure what to do. Da Gama's order had been three words: “Find a dog.” He hadn't said whether it should be red or black, young or old, alive or dead. Though Comes suspected it didn't matter. He remembered the priest reeling on the deck, bloodied but defiant, while his men were executed one by one.

A thatched palm roof overhung the shack's woven reed walls, and a child's doll lay among herbs in the small garden. Comes thought of the family inside, the mother and father and children, living in the particular squalor of this heathen city. He thought of how to lure the dog to him and how to get it back on the small boat. If only he'd brought a piece of fish to use as chum. He didn't want to kill it. He stepped forward, then froze. Surely this dog, attached as it was to a home, would bark wildly if he stepped too near, waking the entire street and killing him as if it had plunged a knife into his chest. He clenched his fist. No, he backed away. It

during the day. The bustle of men and women in brightly colored robes like those he'd seen on the priest. Dyes more vivid than any in the world, worth dying for.

Ahead, the land dropped away and a bridge crossed a canal. The slow-moving water stank horribly of fish and feces, as if the entire population ate and shat there together in unison, before tossing away the remains of their catch. Comes realized that a network of these canals connected the city, to be shat and bathed in at will. The animals. With a brief flash of pride, he remembered the aqueducts and plumbing of Porto, a separate city beneath the city, its own intestine, silently bearing the waste away. No wonder the Zamorin's army had no artillery. No wonder da Gama would crush them beneath his heel with only 15 ships.

Comes leaned over the bridge's rail and looked down at the black banks. His eyes adjusted to the darkness and he saw a lighter shape moving along the water's edge. Its head was down as it snuffled through the refuse. The hair along its spine was ragged and patchy and



the tip of one ear had been bitten off. Its distended stomach hung nearly to the ground, slapping from side to side, a horrid excess of skin. A stray no one would miss. It might even be an act of mercy. Without letting himself hesitate or think further, Comes crept off the bridge onto the steep embankment.

Almost immediately, he slipped and fell backward, landing hard on his ass. The dog raised its head and watched as Comes slid feet-first down to the fetid water, soaking himself in mud and shit. He thrashed upright, sopping the slime from his cuffs, nausea rising in his stomach. He cursed and then apologized to God and then cursed again. The dog, only 10 yards away, blinked and raised one ear. "It's okay," Comes whispered softly. "Come, boy, come here." The dog's ears flattened, and it turned and began to trot along the bank, sway-backed on an injured leg.

"No, no." Comes shook himself and plunged after it, but it sped up, tucking its tail between its legs and loping with surprising speed toward the beach.

"I won't hurt you." His lies were ignored. He felt around for a piece of fish or meat to offer, but encountered only things too slimy and horrible to hold. The dog followed the canal outward from the town. Comes was less afraid of being heard here. He'd be taken for another scavenger down in the muck, or a madman; surely there were plenty of those in the filthy city. He fingered the length of rope around his waist; he planned to use it to secure the dog's muzzle and claws—all the better if he could drive it out to the beach and catch it there. He didn't want to get mauled in the tiny boat. The canal walls were supported by stone abutments, ancient and simple architecture. The water moved slow and murky beside him.

It was the deepest part of the night, two hours before dawn. Comes tasted metallic adrenaline, spurring him onward. Once as a small boy, he'd watched a mendicant cross hot coals, and noticed how the man never looked down. He'd thought at the time that this was the key—pain must only be something you could see—but now it had become his life: a race to not look down. His feet slapped the shallow water. If he had children someday, he would forbid them from ever leaving his house. His tailbone ached where he'd landed. The dog remained far ahead, but it slowed as they neared the beach.

The canal widened and in the distance Comes saw da Gama's armada. The 15 towering ships like demons of the ocean's depths, forming a wall across the mouth of the bay. It felt like no part of him. Like no sign of home. The masts and gunwales loomed blackly as if they'd risen from the water in the night. Comes wondered if the Indian fishermen looked to their dark silence and questioned their lives. Did they seek to repent, fall to their knees and accept the one true God? Or

did they merely try to carry on in the face of another incomprehensible machination, threatening to crush them beneath its wheel? Da Gama wanted everything, an unfettered monopoly on the spice trade, and he would have it, even if it meant burning the city to the ground. Comes shook his head. What was the use of such thoughts? He was only a deckhand. *Get the dog, get back to the ship.*

A delta of sorts spilled across the sand. At high tide it would be swallowed by the waves, but now it stretched before him in a glimmering wash. The dog stopped at its edge and looked back. Comes stopped as well. His only hope was to trick it and awaken the trust all dogs have in men, even after years of abuse. He turned away and watched the creature out of the corner of his eye. It stared back, head down, miserable in the open. He reached into his pocket and withdrew an invisible morsel. He sniffed it. He dropped it on the ground and went down on all fours, keeping himself turned from the dog. He raised his rear and lowered his head, snuffling his nose just above the sand and clacking his teeth together, pretending to chew. He picked up fish bones and snapped them with his fingers.

The dog continued to stare at him, perhaps remembering some long-ago kindness. He was blocking its passage back to the safety of the canal. It looked out to the sea, it looked down, and then it took a tentative step toward him. Comes kept on with the fish bones, making happy crunching noises. The dog approached. Carefully and slowly, hardly daring to breathe, Comes loosened the rope from around his waist. He remained this way until the dog was only a few feet away. It stopped there, raised its nose and sniffed the air with a desperate hope. The look in its eyes was nearly enough to make Comes give up his plan. Take the dog in as a pet, flee into the jungle, build a shack, find a woman and begin again, for he too longed for a better world.

Instead he lunged, catching the dog around the shoulders and driving it to the sand. It yelped and crumpled beneath him, lashing its head from side to side. It clawed and bit his arms, but age quickly betrayed it—he felt the tired frailty beneath its skin—and it gave up, hardly struggling as Comes tied the rope around its snout and legs. When he'd finished, it stared up at him with the same imploring look as before, as if its fate were not yet sealed. "I'm sorry," Comes whispered, touching its ears before hefting it to his chest and carrying it to the boat. "I don't have any food. I'm sorry."

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The high priest was brought to the deck at dawn. His robes were bloodstained and his cheeks were battered. His skin was lighter than the other Indians Comes had seen, and his entire body seemed devoid of hair, from the top of his skull to the soles of his bare feet. Deep purple bruises stood out beneath his shackles. His

hazel eyes were glossy and dazed. All the defiance had left him after a night in a cell below deck, with the hands and feet of his retinue, including his son, in a sack before him. Yet still he walked gracefully, with small, careful steps, as if in his sleep.

Admiral da Gama emerged from the cabin atop the stern to greet him. Tall and bare-headed, with a long, wide beard over the gold-trimmed red cloaks of royalty. He'd taken on the aspect of a king as soon as they'd set sail from Lisbon, and his ambition seemed to stretch around him, a huge, shadowy specter reaching for all those who stood in his way. He looked at Comes, still stinking and dripping in his soiled clothes. His gray beard was matched by the grayness of his eyes. Calm, almost kindly, as he descended the steps. He could have been a grandfather or a priest himself. A heavy gold crucifix swayed in the folds of his tunic. Nothing betrayed his cruelty save for the steady depth of his breath, as if the sight of the beaten man and frightened dog invigorated him, a tonic against the morning chill. The first mate Sergini stood behind the dog, with the rope Comes had used to secure it looped through his fist. The officers Berrio and Lopes flanked the priest. Comes watched, shivering, along with the rest of the crew. The dog also trembled, looking back at him as if to a friend.

Dawn sunlight shot gold shafts through the mouth of the bay, too bright to look upon. Sea birds wheeled between them, but no fishing boats passed through the blockade. Comes wondered where their fresh catches had come from. They must be sneaking out at night, like the man he'd seen returning home in the distance. He was duty-bound to inform the admiral, but he kept his mouth locked shut.

Sailors scurried across the decks of the other ships, refixing the riggings, checking guns and anchors, while on the *Esmeralda* everyone was still and silent, waiting. A tentacle could have breached the sea and slammed down on the deck and they would not have moved unless told to, so great was their fear of da Gama. Survival had become their only goal, not riches nor glory, survival through obedience. Only to see their homes again. Comes forced himself to stand erect, exhausted as he was from his sleepless night, and longed to go to his bunk, strip and dry his clothes.

"You are a spy," da Gama said to the priest. "Lower than this stray dog. And I will teach you your place in the world." They had been negotiating for three weeks, had parried across food-laden tables, and now, finally, as da Gama had always planned, the negotiations had failed.

Nothing flickered in the priest's glassy eyes. He had retreated deep within himself, and Comes hoped that was where he would remain. Berrio kicked out his knees—"The admiral is speaking to you!"—and he slumped forward, all the way to his stomach. Lopes had to yank him upright and hold him limply, like a marionette.



“Take his lips and his ears,” da Gama said. “He has no more use for them. They sow only falsehoods.” He turned to his men, speaking in the same even tone with which he ordered his nightly meal. “We will bring light to this dark country, as our forefathers did to Jerusalem. With the sword.”

Berrio drew a small thin knife from his belt. Its blade was only two inches long and stropped to a razor’s edge. Comes and all the men knew of this knife. They watched him sharpen it, humming hymns to himself as he kissed the blade back and forth across the rough stone. Back and forth, back and forth, until Comes wondered how there was any blade left. It was a knife he used for close work, and there had been much close work of late. Lopes raised the priest’s head and held it firmly between his large hands. He grinned. Berrio stepped forward. The priest’s eyes flashed into recognition as the blade flicked nearer. They joggled about, and he began to speak wildly, his words rising, begging for his life perhaps, but the crew of the *Esmeralda* would never know, for the remains of his interpreter drifted beneath

the prisoner slumped back against Lopes’s knees, weeping, the tears running along with blood down his smooth cheeks. Lopes released him and patted the top of his head, now a perfect bald oval with a running, red beard. He grinned around at his fellow sailors, as if they should share in this joke. Comes felt sick. He had to keep himself from raising his hands protectively over his own ears, as if Berrio might continue with his knife through the crew. He imagined the ears themselves to be mufflers, and a mad roaring to now be overwhelming the priest, as all the noises of creation rushed in.

The dog was fed the ears, chewing them while anxiously looking around, and then da Gama nodded to Sergini. For this, Comes could not look away. He had found the dog; he had brought it here. He had left his home, sailed around the horn of Africa and crossed the unmapped sea for this, and this was what would prevent him from ever finding his way back. Sergini’s knife was long and curved like his own, less sharp than Berrio’s. The dog made a horrible sound when it cut into

left revealed the tan skin above his collarbone. It would have been a comical sight on stage, this regal man in fine robes with a dog’s ears in place of his own, but here in morning sun with the sweat and tears and blood on his face, it was like spikes nailing Comes’s feet to the deck. He glanced around at his shipmates. Surely if this was not hell, they would find themselves there soon enough.

The admiral cleared a path through the crew and led the priest to the ladder above the small boat in which Comes had recently returned. Lopes unshackled the priest’s wrists and ankles. He winked at his forced red smile and tied the sack of his men’s hands and feet around his neck, a pendant to match his bloody visage. Then he backed away, leaving only da Gama with the priest at the rail.

The admiral held his chin high and looked across the bay to the city, as if he could already see it in ruins. He breathed in deeply the morning air. He closed his eyes. Then he leaned close to the priest’s cheek. Using a white-gloved hand, he lifted the gray, bitten ear to whisper beneath it, and the priest

IF THIS WAS NOT HELL, THEY WOULD FIND THEMSELVES THERE SOON.

the waves. Berrio touched the knife gently to the priest’s lips, as if to shush him, and Comes turned away as the blade made its first red line beneath his nose. He heard a strangled moan, and when he turned back, he was greeted by teeth. Long and white, ringed by dripping red gums and leering forth with a crazed rage completely at odds with the terror in the priest’s eyes.

The dog whined. The only other sound was the new harshness of the priest’s breath. Berrio held up the lips with his thumb and forefinger, a ragged loop of flesh, still in one piece. He offered them to da Gama, but the admiral jerked his head at the dog. Berrio shrugged and dropped the lips before it on the deck. Sergini loosened the leash. The dog looked up, unsure if it would be kicked or beaten for accepting this treat. It looked to Comes, then quickly, gratefully, it lowered its head and snapped up the bloody morsel and gulped it down.

The priest’s ears required only a single, hard, sawing stroke each. Berrio looked almost disappointed when he had finished, and

its ear. It wrenched and snapped and tried to buck away. But Sergini pinned it with his knee and the ear was taken, and then the second, and then Sergini lifted the dog up by the rope and it looked to Comes wildly one last time, before being pitched, yowling, over the rail into the sea.

Comes heard the splash, and then no more.

Berrio drew forth a sewing needle and thread from the pouch at his belt. Sergini handed him the dog’s ears, and Comes realized what they had been tasked to do. Berrio knelt before the priest and with a practiced deftness, as if his face were a torn shirt, began to sew the ears above the wound where his own had been. Da Gama watched calmly, paternally, though his eyes had begun to glow, as if heated by the culmination of his edict. His power at sea was boundless, and Comes wondered if he too felt himself hidden from God on this far side of the earth.

When the operation was completed, the priest was forced to his feet. The ragged gray ears hung to his neck. The bitten-off tip of the

flinched, as if in such a short time it had become his own.

“You will go home now, to your false king,” da Gama said. “You and what remains of your heathen men. And you will tell him one thing: This is God’s country now.”

...

Comes watched the small boat cross the empty bay. He felt something inside himself slip away. He flailed after it. *He cannot see you here*, he told himself. But it was a lie.

There was no sign of the dog now. It had sunk to the lightless depths, where fish and crabs would eat what of it remained. Perhaps wondering at its earless head, much like their own. Comes gripped the damp sides of his breeches to keep his hands from shaking. He tried to pray.

The boat’s prow zigzagged as the priest rowed jerkily, his head bowed, blood dripping from the dog’s ears to his shoulders. Sunlight all around him. Returning with his new face to a kingdom that would soon be plundered and a temple that would soon be burned.

But at least he was going home. ■



*“Before we begin the orgy, I’d just like to cover
a couple of things about sexual harassment.”*



Renaissance

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOVE SHORE



Woman

December Playmate (and Playboy Club Bunny) **Jordan Emanuel** takes the road less traveled





PLAYMATE

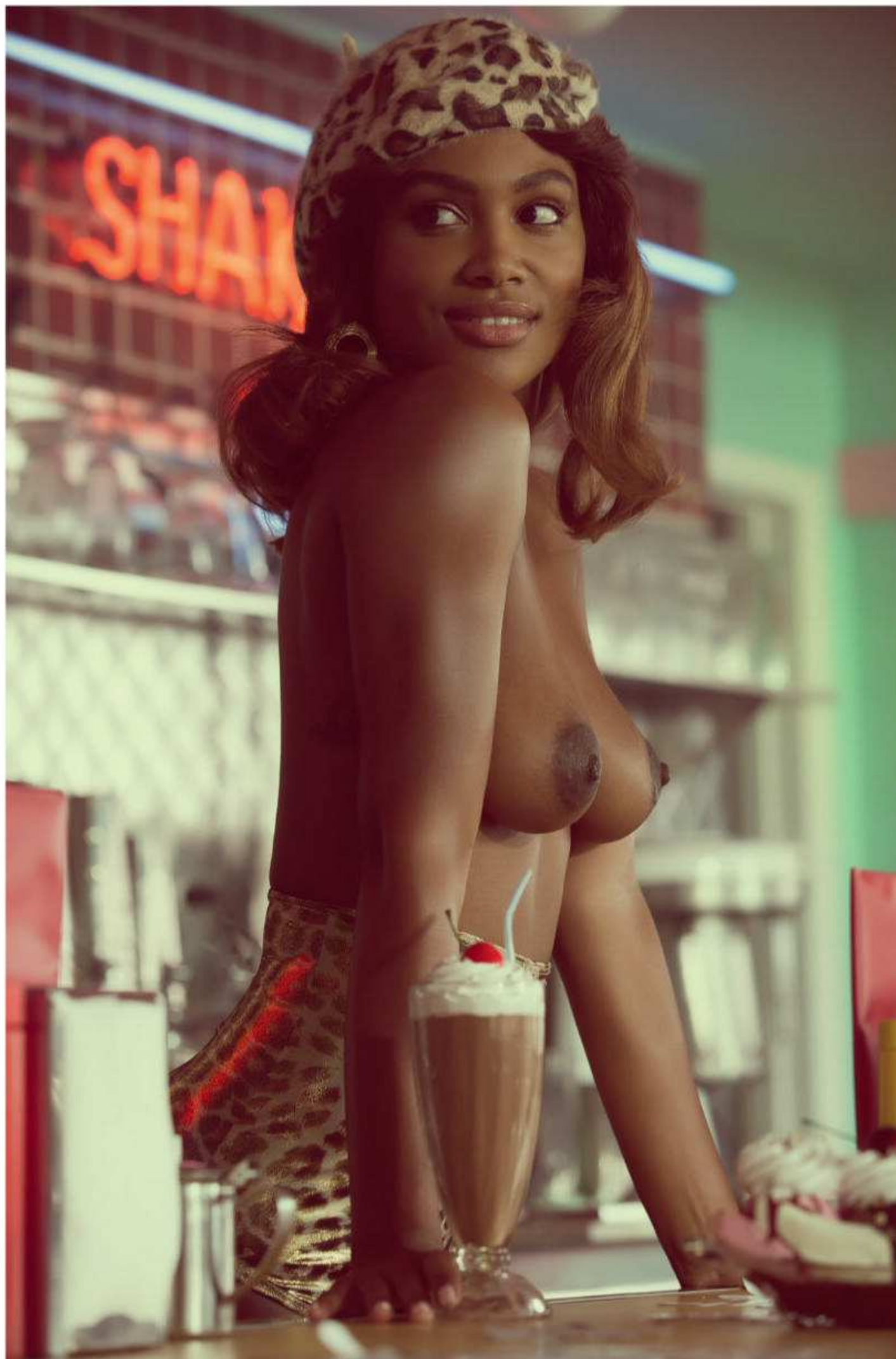
“I’m fiercely independent,” says Jordan Emanuel, a New York City-based renaissance woman who can now add Playboy double threat to her sprawling résumé. The model, journalist and philanthropist just brought back one of the brand’s most cherished traditions, one that hasn’t recurred in decades: that of the Bunny turned Playmate. When we opened our latest Playboy Club New York in September, Jordan was part of the freshly anointed Bunny staff. Leave it to our December Playmate to play both sides. “There are a lot of contradictions in my personality that normally wouldn’t mesh,” she says, “but it’s how I am. I’m an introverted extrovert.”

Born in Baltimore and raised in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, Jordan graduated from the University of Miami with a triple-pronged degree in broadcast journalism, music business and art history. As for modeling, some of the credit goes to her mother. “I originally wanted to be a writer, but my mom told me I was too cute,” she laughs. “She said, ‘You need to be in front of the camera.’”

Working at the Playboy Club, which has taken up most of her time of late, is an opportunity that came about quite serendipitously. “I wanted to do a birthday-themed shoot because I’m extra, so I did ‘25 Days of Jordan’ on Instagram for my 25th birthday.” Thanks in large part to that vivacious, funny and, of course, wildly sexy series, job offers started rolling in.

While modeling feeds her soul in ways she didn’t expect, Jordan is using her exposure for the greater good. Women With Voices, a nonprofit she co-founded, creates a range of communal spaces for women of different backgrounds. Offering everything from counseling to networking events to wig donations for women fighting cancer, it’s a labor of love and a beautiful expression of Jordan’s spirit.

Now if she could just strike that ever-elusive work-life balance. “There’s beauty in the struggle,” she says. “I’m working toward something. It’s all about following your instincts and creating your own way of thinking.” ■







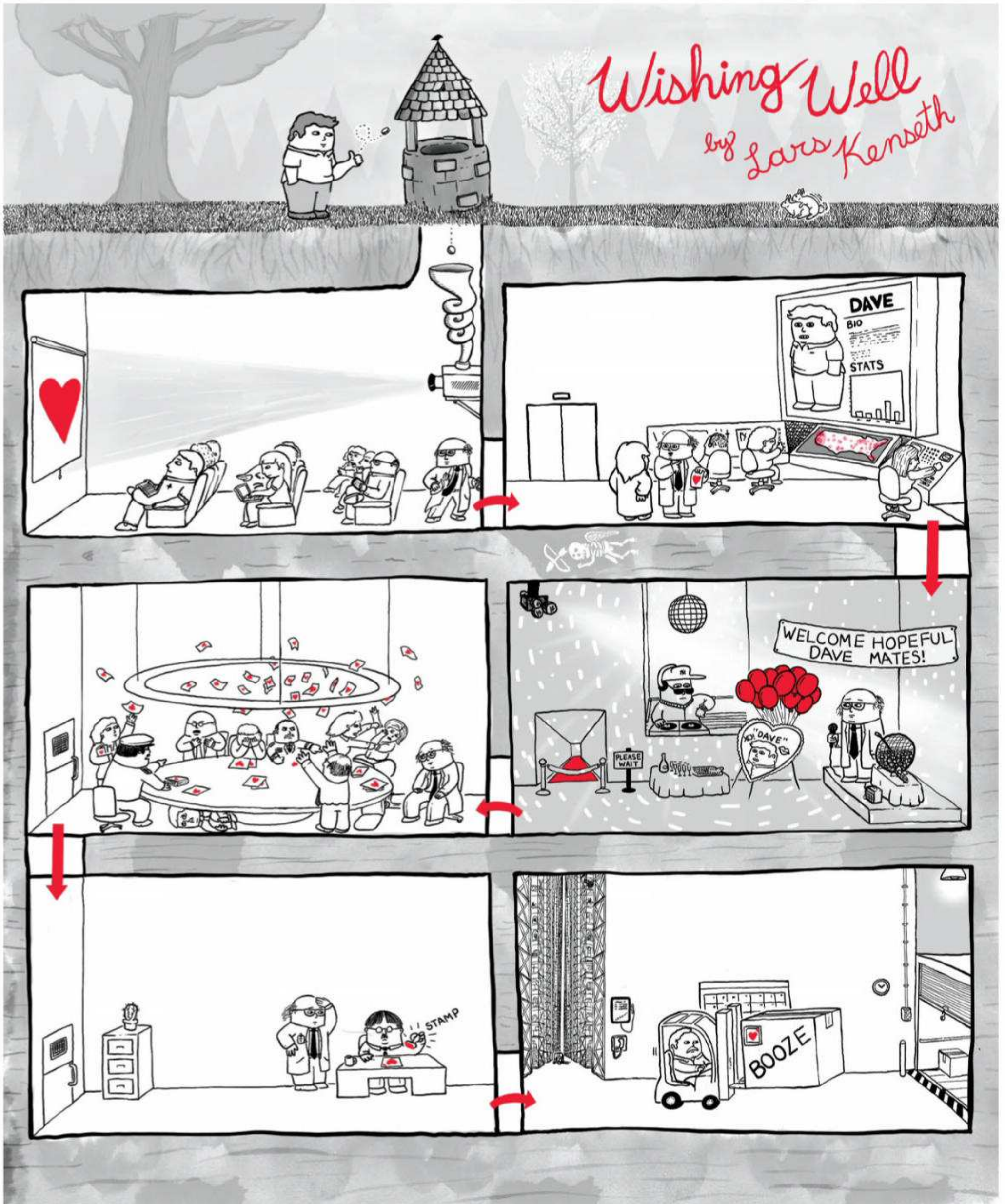






Wishing Well

by Lars Kenseth









DATA SHEET



BIRTHPLACE: Baltimore, Maryland **CURRENT CITY:** New York, New York

A STAR IS BORN

I love astrology and astronomy. When I visit places that aren't as lit up at night, I turn into a dork with a telescope. My best friend even named a star after me; I have a certificate and a map with the coordinates.

SWIPE RIGHT

I belong to a generation that can easily dismiss a person with one swipe. You don't like my smile? Swipe! We're not looking at the value of a human anymore, and it's scary. I need someone who understands my heart and is considerate. That's huge for me.

FACE VALUE

I have a resting bitch face, but I don't have a resting bitch attitude. I'm definitely friendly when it comes to women. As for men, I'm known to be a little savage.

AMERICAN IDOLS

If Rihanna and Stevie Nicks each went half-in on a baby, that would be me. I have two distinct personalities: the sage hippie who's all about alignment and manifesting, and the BadGalRiRi who has a strong sense of self.

SINGLED OUT

I've stayed single in my 20s. I don't need to get married tomorrow, but I'd like to explore an adult relationship—just for the life experience.

ALL FOR ONE

People can feel empowered by different things. Our country is called the United States, but we're not that united. I think we need to let people live however they choose to. Let's appreciate our differences. If we took the time, we'd learn a lot from one another.

STRANGER THINGS

I believe in aliens, and I also believe in mermaids. There's so much we haven't explored, so why not? It's naive and egotistical of humans to assume there's nothing else out there.

BEA YOURSELF

I collect Monopoly games. I got a *Golden Girls*-edition Monopoly board for Christmas last year, and it made me the happiest person alive. I identify with Dorothy 1,000 percent. She has the best side-eye. My side-eye game is strong, but it's got nothing on hers.

PRESS PAUSE

I can be that person who starts twerking when "Back Dat Azz Up" comes on. But then I'll come home and I'll need to stream *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for the next six hours.

J E

@jordy_jor





JAMES BOND ORIGIN:

A TRAIN TO CATCH

JEFF PARKER/BOB Q/JORDIE BELLAIRE/SIMON BOWLAND/NATE COSBY

1941. WAR RAGES ACROSS THE WORLD.

Royal Navy Lieutenant JAMES BOND has volunteered for a new service, SECRET in nature...



I'M
BOND,
JA--

--THAT'S
ALL I NEED
TO KNOW,
BOND.

MISSION NOTES, 20/10/41--
THE HMS SEAWOLF
BROUGHT ME TO A RENDEZVOUS
OFF THE COAST OF BELGIUM.
THIS CONCLUDED MY BRIEF
SERVICE AS A SUBMARINER.



BEFORE TRANSFERRING
TO A DESTROYER, I WAS
ON LOAN TO A CELL OF
THE BELGIAN RESISTANCE.

YOU MAY
ROW. WE
ARE TIRED
OF IT.

GLADLY,
MISS...



CALL ME
ESMEE.

WE HAVE
YOUR SUPPLIES AT
THE SAFE HOUSE
WE'LL USE
TONIGHT.

THEIR LEADER
WAS TOUGH, HER
TEAM CAPABLE.



LINING ALL
THE NITRO
UNDER ONE
SLEEPER...

...SHOULD
BE ENOUGH.

BUT THEY NEEDED
SOMEONE WITH
TRAINING RIGGING
EXPLOSIVES.

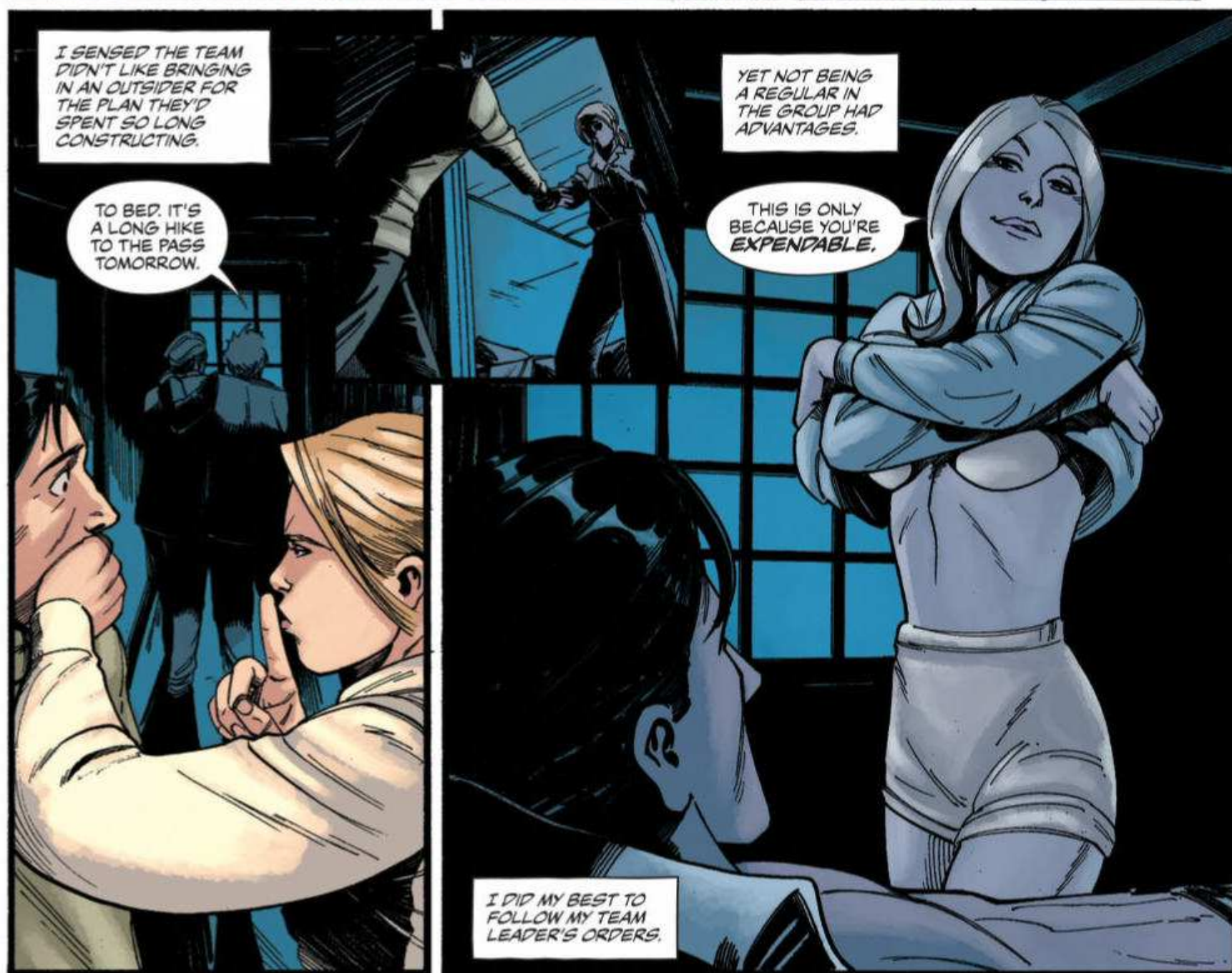


THE TRAIN BRINGS NAZI AMMO AND FUEL TO ANTWERP.

THIS SEEMS A GOOD SPOT.

NO! IF WE DERAIL IT THERE, WE ONLY SLOW THEM DOWN A DAY.

BLOW IT IN THIS NARROW PASS BY THE RIVER... AND IT COULD BE BLOCKED FOR MONTHS.



I SENSED THE TEAM DIDN'T LIKE BRINGING IN AN OUTSIDER FOR THE PLAN THEY'D SPENT SO LONG CONSTRUCTING.

TO BED. IT'S A LONG HIKE TO THE PASS TOMORROW.

YET NOT BEING A REGULAR IN THE GROUP HAD ADVANTAGES.

THIS IS ONLY BECAUSE YOU'RE EXPENDABLE.

I DID MY BEST TO FOLLOW MY TEAM LEADER'S ORDERS.



GOOD SO FAR--NO NAZIS ALL DAY.

MOST ON THIS ROUTE ARE RESISTANCE. THEY'LL LET US KNOW IF WE'RE IN DANGER.

ESMEE'S TIMING WAS PERFECT. IT TOOK THE ENTIRE DAY TO REACH THE RAILWAY. WE EACH CARRIED A BOTTLE OF THE NITRO IN CASE ONE OF US FELL.





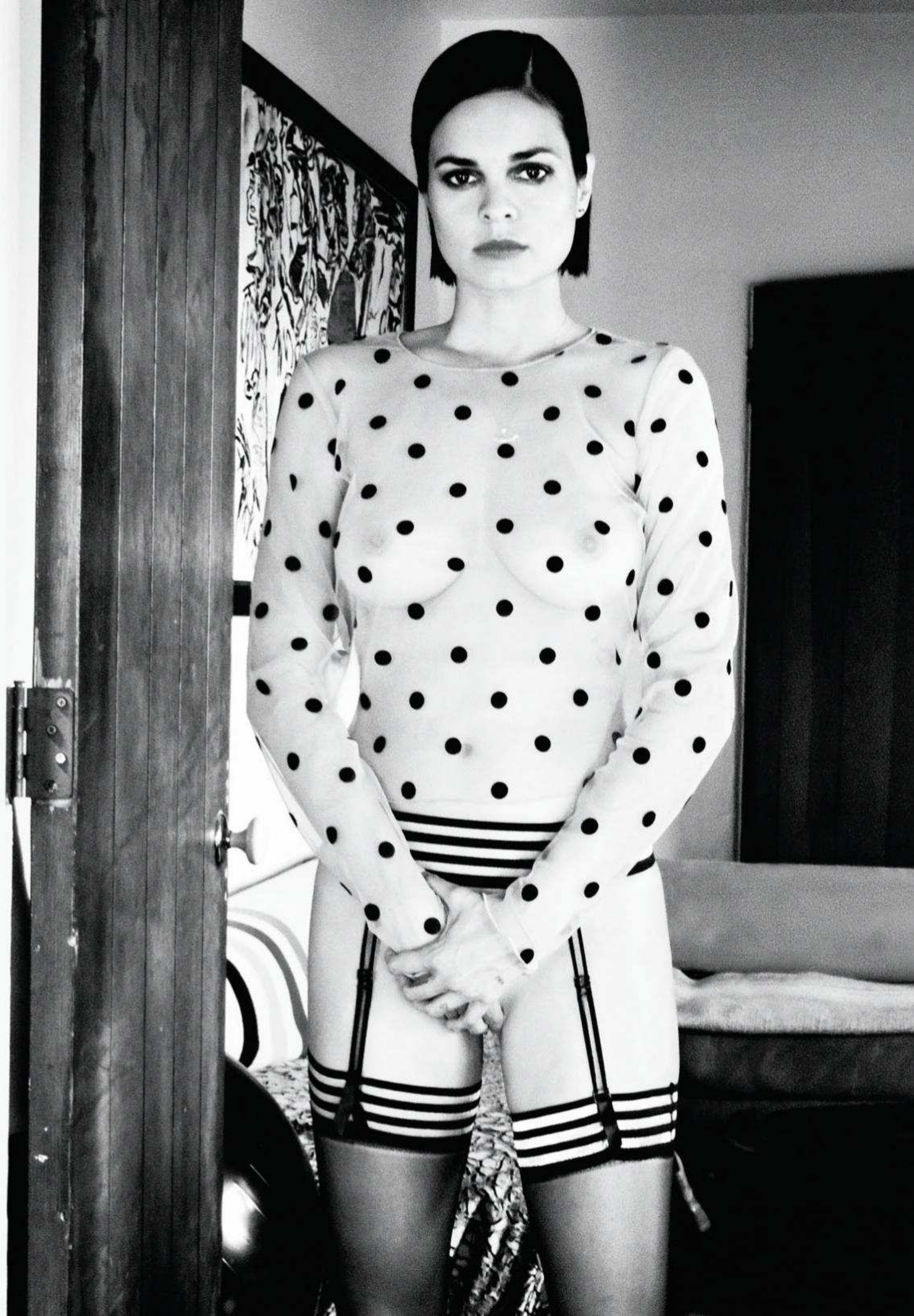




The adventure continues in **JAMES BOND ORIGIN** on sale now from **DYNAMITE COMICS!**
Go to dynamite.com or wherever comics are sold!

PLAYBOY PROFILE

DAWN OF A NEW ERA





Lina Esco captured the world's attention by asking women to free the nipple in the name of equality. Now she's calling on men to join her crusade to update the Constitution. Will it work?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ELLEN VON UNWERTH**

You might not know much about the Equal Rights Amendment, but you probably know plenty about Free the Nipple. The former was conceived by suffragist Alice Paul almost a century ago, after American women won the right to vote but still found themselves without gender-specific civil rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The latter is a global phenomenon created

BY **JAMES RICKMAN**

by an actress and activist fed up with the double standards applied to nudity and perpetuated by state law and social media policy. The ERA has languished since the last major push toward its ratification in the early 1980s, and Free the Nipple remains one of the most viral memes of the past decade, supported by the likes of Kendall Jenner, Chrissy Teigen and Cara Delevingne. Despite their differences, these two movements converged two years ago when Free the Nipple creator Lina Esco (who also co-wrote, directed and starred in the 2014 movie of the same name) and a small bipartisan team launched the Human Campaign—an organization with a new take on getting women's full equality written into America's founding document.

"The biggest obstacle we had with Free the Nipple was that it was a very small umbrella; at first glance, people were always misunderstanding it," Esco says, meeting with PLAYBOY at a breezy hotel restaurant in Beverly Hills. "The word *human* was so much more powerful. I believe that people don't want to be divided by race, they don't want to be divided by color, they don't want to be divided by gender. They want to come together."

Esco has been in the film and TV world for more than a decade, having appeared on shows like *Flaked*, *Kingdom* and *Heroes: Destiny*. These days she's a principal cast member on CBS's *S.W.A.T.*, whose second season premiered in September. She arrives to our interview fresh from the boxing gym, dressed in ripped jeans and a faded Fugazi T-shirt, her chin-length hair framing a strong jawline and a pair of dark, searching eyes. The setting is

apt: Esco learned at an early age that when it comes to advocacy, show business can be as powerful as politics.

But calling out gender inequality by celebrating nudity is one thing; amending the Constitution is another—a fact that's not lost on Esco and her team. Consider again the differences between Free the Nipple and the Human Campaign: from specific to broad, from playful to serious, from gendered (in context, since men's nipples have been free for a while now) to all-inclusive. It's that last part that matters most to Esco. It is, she believes, the movement's leftward drift and its failure to engage men that have crippled the ERA. These are the flaws she aims to fix. All she has to do is build a few bridges—across the gender spectrum and the ever more abysmal political divide.

Most entertainers would be more comfortable making a donation, posting some strident lines on their socials and getting on with their lives. This one wants to unite a country that finds itself in the throes of a civil war.

...

Lina Esco grew up poor in Miami, the child of a mother with dreams of being a painter and a father she describes as an "aspiring architect." The latter gave Esco her first sense of inequality. "My father was completely...how can I describe it? Controlling, macho, type-A toward my mother at all times," she says. "Telling her what to wear, how to act, while he and I would go out and he'd be checking out women and be completely obvious about it."

The family's devout Catholicism posed its own challenges. In confession, Esco would argue with the man sitting on the other side of the lattice, asking why Adam and Eve were depicted with belly buttons and why the Bible referred to God as a "he." Tensions with family and faith came to a head one day when her father invited people to the house and conducted a ritual involving scattered salt and a ring of fire on the floor. Esco, then 13, was placed in the middle. "I'm like, Wait, what? My father just put me in here because he thinks it's going to protect me and bring money to them? But I

went along with it; I was really young." To this day, the memory baffles her.

With her mother's tacit support, Esco ran away from home in her mid-teens. She had already gotten into acid, weed and mushrooms. Soon enough, she was hooked on heroin. She couch-surfed, lived on the streets intermittently and drifted apart from her non-junkie friends. One day, messed up on something at the beach, Esco was approached by a woman who told her she should model. And with that, she found herself flying to Los Angeles, Paris and New York, barely old enough to drive but somehow building a career. She kicked heroin—no rehab or methadone, just five days of hell. She booked some commercials and reconnected with a zest for acting she'd discovered back in school. In 2005 she landed her first credit, appearing alongside Jessica Biel and Chris Evans in a film called *London*—just a few years after she'd been living on the streets. She was barely 20.

Most of this she relates from a couch in her trailer. It's two weeks after our first interview, and *S.W.A.T.* is shooting at a sun-baked lot in Santa Clarita, California. Esco has just wrapped for the day and is still wearing a tight black top and matching tactical pants. She speaks comfortably, letting her volume rise and fall as she probes the scars of her childhood, with a slight *Newsies* inflection you might not expect from a Miami native. She skips the fact that early in her acting career she produced and directed promos for *The Cove*, the 2009 Oscar-winning documentary about the slaughter of dolphins in Japanese waters, and that in addition to founding Free the Nipple, she helped Miley Cyrus launch the Happy Hippie Foundation. (Esco and Cyrus met while making the 2012 movie *LOL*.) As her career has developed, so has her activism.

Asked if she inherited any goodness from her father, she allows a rare pause. "No," she says. "The only good thing I inherited is that without him being the way he was, and without all the bad things happening, I would have never run away from home. I would have never done the things I've done. And I would have



never done a film like *Free the Nipple* or tried to be a part of the gender-equality revolution.”

• • •

Esco launched the Human Campaign in 2016 with the help of two unlikely allies: Johanna Maska, a former campaign operative and White House media director for President Barack Obama, and Katie Packer Beeson, who served as deputy campaign manager for Mitt Romney in his 2012 bid for the presidency. It quickly became part of a diverse and growing movement that includes the ERA Coalition, the Kamala Lopez film *Equal Means Equal* and the advocacy of celebrities including Meryl Streep, Alyssa Milano and Patricia Arquette.

The language of the ERA is simple; its path to ratification is anything but. The first and most important of the amendment’s three sections reads, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” The arguments against it range from the practical—the 14th Amendment promises “equal protection” to all citizens born or naturalized on American soil, though it’s also the first amendment to add specifically male language to the Constitution—to the cultural, as personified by ultraconservative consti-

tutional lawyer Phyllis Schlafly, who died in 2016. The ERA cleared both houses of Congress in the early 1970s, but thanks in part to Schlafly’s STOP ERA countermovement, it fell three states short of the necessary 38-state quorum at the time of its 1982 deadline. (These days, vocal ERA opponents are remarkably hard to come by outside the occasional op-ed piece; legal complexities aside, seemingly no one wants to be seen standing in the way of women’s rights.) Just this year, Illinois became the 37th state to ratify the amendment, but even after the 38th state signs on, a maze of legal challenges lies in wait.

Its advocates see the ERA as a constitutional high ground from which to close the gender pay gap, bring about greater representation in government and business, and fight sexual assault and harassment. And they see its benefits as universal, as you might expect from a movement whose direct and indirect supporters have ranged from Gloria Steinem and Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Richard Nixon and Antonin Scalia.

“When you bring the wife or the daughter or the mother into the picture,” Esco says, “it changes everything.”

Esco’s take on the 14th Amendment is that,

in case after case, it has simply not delivered equal protection. She cites *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*, a Supreme Court case in which a greeter employed by the big-box giant unsuccessfully sued for equal pay and treatment for male and female workers. But even defenders of the 14th see the merits of a newer amendment that specifically protects women.

“My argument would be that 14 plus 19 equals ERA,” says Akhil Amar, a Yale law professor and constitutional scholar, citing the 1920 amendment that granted women the right to vote. Speaking with *PLAYBOY* a week before testifying at the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, Amar argues that there is value in the ERA—even if that value is more declaratory than practical. “I’m for it less because I think it would actually work big changes in legal doctrine but more because I would like to get everyone mobilized around this idea,” he says. “I think it would be good for women, and for women of this generation to do it themselves rather than merely inherit it from their foremothers.”

Why this generation? Three factors suggest themselves. One, Esco, born a year after Mark Zuckerberg, proved via *Free the Nipple* that she has the innate social media savvy



**"THE ONLY REASON WOMEN'S
MOVEMENTS CONTINUE TO NOT
MOVE FORWARD FAST ENOUGH
IS THE EXCLUSION OF MEN."**



common to people her age. Two, the war on terror, the Great Recession and the protests against both underscored her generation's transition into adulthood. Three, with the rise of President Donald Trump—in particular his “locker-room talk” and alleged history of sexual assault—it's hard to remember a time when activism had so much raw fuel and powerful tools all at once.

“When I was growing up there was no talk of women's empowerment,” says Esco's *Free the Nipple* co-star Lola Kirke. “The Spice Girls were *Spice Girls*, and they were adult women. ‘Girl power’ was the closest we got to it, but that was still couched in some kind of patriarchy. The way we consider gender is being overhauled in a massive way, and I think Lina is an agent of that.”

The time may be right for the Human Campaign, but whether its approach will finally get the ERA passed remains to be seen. No moral cause exists in a vacuum, and Esco's commitment to inclusivity was tested when she found herself swept up in another movement, thanks to another insecure and volatile man.

...

Last fall, a particular *Free the Nipple* credit—“very special thanks”—prompted a reporter from *The Washington Post* to contact Esco, who became part of a wide-ranging article titled “Violence. Threats. Begging. Harvey Weinstein's 30-Year Pattern of Abuse in Hollywood.” It ran just days into the cultural cataclysm that birthed the #MeToo movement. Compressed into approximately 300 words, Esco's Weinstein story runs like this: “Around 2010,” they meet through a mutual friend. Later, Weinstein invites her to dinner, and during that dinner he says, “I think we should see a movie in the theater, like back in the day, and we should kiss.” Esco declines, despite Weinstein's implying that accepting his advances would make things “easier” for her, and writes it off as a typical power play by a creepy man. While making *Free the Nipple*, she hits him up for help finding a film editor. All true, but while Weinstein's motives are clear enough in the article, Esco's are not.

“I didn't go and search for that story,” she tells *PLAYBOY*. “I didn't go searching to talk about what happened to me. I believe my story wasn't strong enough compared to the other women's. I'd been raped twice before I was 18, so this stuff that happened with me and Harvey was nothing in my eyes. In no way or shape was I trying to be a victim.”

Retracing the story in her trailer, she describes that first encounter as “two film geeks talking about shots in movies.” Months later,

she received an out-of-the-blue text—an invitation to meet Weinstein at a restaurant within the Peninsula, another swanky Beverly Hills hotel. Emerging from a boxing-gym workout, dressed in sweats and sneakers, she thought, Fuck it, I'll go. She knew, of course, that Weinstein was a valuable friend for an emerging Hollywood talent to have. She was unaware of the allegations that would burst into the public record a few years later.

So she joined him at the restaurant. Then, out of nowhere, came Weinstein's proposition. "And he just would not let it go," she says. "He was so aggressive about it." Eventually, Esco got up and left.

A couple of years later, *Free the Nipple* was in the can—but barely. The project had spooked Esco's agents, who dropped her, and many others mistook the film for pornography. Money problems and canceled locations in New York City found Esco in the editing room, thinking, I'm a million dollars deep and I don't have a fucking film. A producer suggested that Esco call on Weinstein. "I was like, Fuck it! That fucking guy insulted me like that, disrespected me? Fuck that. I'm gonna use him now." She texted Weinstein, and within minutes his secretary connected Esco to Matt Landon, one of Weinstein's longtime editors, who stepped in and helped her finish the film. Hence the very special thanks for Weinstein.

"It's not like he asked for it," she says. "I did not forget what he did to me, but I turned it around."

The *Post* article allows the interpretation that Esco simply ditched her morals the minute they stood in the way of her career. But Esco has a different take, one that's more consistent with the rest of her story. "If *The Washington Post* had never contacted me, I would've never said anything. There was no need. In my eyes, I walked away from that, and I was like, He's just a fucking pig. That's it. I walked away from it."

• • •

As it happens, Esco tells PLAYBOY this story days after sexual-assault allegations emerged against Asia Argento, one of Weinstein's earliest accusers. Although she won't judge Argento's innocence or guilt, Esco has always sensed that "this can happen to men and women." She gives you the sense that a successful movement must be broad enough to account for human error, to welcome radically different ideas on how to reach a common goal, to include people who could be mistaken for the enemy. Hence the *human* in the Human Campaign. It's an invitation to look past differences, as painful as that may be.

"The only reason women's movements and

feminist movements continue to not move forward fast enough is because of the exclusion of men," Esco says. "It's because of the pointing of fingers. We're wasting our time on things that are not important, and we need to come together."

Instead of marches, Esco and her partners plan to chart inroads through government and academia, red states and blue, facilitating conversations while delving into the political process. "Education, communication, conversations," she says. "When you watch people really listen, no matter what your point of view is, people's guards go down."

When those conversations turn to the perceived redundancies between the 14th Amendment and the ERA, a moving case can be made for constitutional evolution. "We talk about amendments," says Akhil Amar. "I believe these are making amends for some of the sins and lapses of earlier generations. I don't think history is always progress. We went from Obama to Trump—that's not progress. But look at the amendments: Almost every amendment, with the exception of Prohibition, which was quickly repealed, is a genuine making of amends. It's an improvement. They add to liberty and equality. That's a pretty extraordinary arc, and the ERA would beautifully fit."

The Human Campaign is in its early stages. Its success will require a major bipartisan con-

sensus both among the electorate and within the government, where the amendment's lapsed deadline would need to be challenged. If Esco is daunted, she doesn't show it. She has spent half her life fighting for a kinder, more equitable world.

So why was she surprised when a Harvard University administrator asked her if she had ever thought of running for office? "I'm like, Never going to happen. I've done a lot of crazy shit in my life. I was doing heroin when I was like 17. I dropped out of high school." The administrator replied, "It doesn't matter. Look who's our president now."

Our president makes several appearances during our conversation in Esco's trailer. She keeps CNN on throughout the day, and this particular day is a big one for Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen, who has just claimed that, at his client's instruction, he paid hush money to porn star Stephanie Clifford and PLAYBOY Playmate Karen McDougal.

The president's proclivities are, of course, familiar territory to Lina Esco: She freed herself from her father, survived sexual assault and, in her own way, settled the score with Weinstein—all before turning 30. And though anger is never far from the surface when Esco speaks, anger does not define her. Her openness in a clenched and divided age may just give the ERA the final push it so urgently needs. ■





GOLDEN



HOOR

*Mais oui! French siren **Maelys Garouis** invites you on a sun-splashed joyride through Provence*

















andid conversation with england's mop-topped
PLAYBOY CARS • HOW HEF SAVED THE HOLLYWOOD SIGN • CLASSIC PLAYMATES • VINTAGE CARTOONS

HERITAGE

SHEP and the FAB FOUR

When PLAYBOY sent humorist Jean Shepherd to interview the Beatles, he walked away unimpressed. As this never-before-seen conversation shows, time did not dilute his views

BY JIM GEORGE

PAUL: We'd be idiots to say it isn't a constant inspiration to be making a lot of money. It is to an one. Why do business tycoons stay tycoons?

RINGO: We used to get in the car, and I'd look over at John and say, "Christ, you're a bloody phenomenon!" and laugh—'cause it was only him.

GEORGE: Ringo and I are gettin' married to each other. But that's a thing you better keep a secret. People would probably think we're queers.

JOHN: If you say you're not religious, people assume you're antireligious. We're not sure what we are, but we're more agnostic than atheistic.



Previous page: Jean Shepherd's travels with the Beatles resulted in the February 1965 *Playboy* Interview. **Left:** Frenzied fans at a 1964 Beatles concert. **Above:** Shepherd co-wrote and narrated *A Christmas Story*, which was based on his humor writing (see *Shep Tales*, opposite).

Tucked among the considerable credits of the late and legendary writer Jean Shepherd—radio shows, TV programs, short stories, books, perennial film favorite *A Christmas Story*—sits one entry that has remained largely overlooked: his February 1965 *Playboy* Interview with the Beatles. The writer-storyteller-broadcaster, credited today with inspiring talents from Jerry Seinfeld to Tom Wolfe, got the plum assignment of traveling with and interviewing the musicians during their fall 1964 tour of the U.K., observing Beatlemania up close and from both sides of the curtain.

While the Hammond, Indiana native would go on to have a rich history with the magazine, penning two dozen short stories over nearly two decades and winning an unprecedented four Playboy Writing Awards, in 1964 Shepherd was an odd choice to interview the world's biggest band. For starters, his heart was not that of a rock-and-roller but of a jazzman. Indeed, Shepherd had collaborated with Charles Mingus on the musician's 1957 album *The Clown*, improvising a spoken-word narration for the title track. Furthermore, Shepherd cultivated an apparent disdain for mainstream music, which the Beatles had taken over. The dynamic between author and subject was what the Brits would call chalk and cheese.

Yet the interview he filed was historic: It presented the Beatles in an adult forum, arguably for the first time. Religion, sex, homosexuality, transexuality, money, royalty—the Beatles touched on plenty of mature topics, though mostly via wisecracks. The language used was hardly the gentle fare found in the fawning teen mags of which the Beatles were a staple;

you would not find, for instance, Ringo saying “tits” in *16* magazine.

Seventeen years after the interview had come out, Shepherd was promoting his latest story collection, *A Fistful of Fig Newtons*, which *PLAYBOY* had excerpted. It was 1982, and I was a freelance reporter curious about the new book when I interviewed Shepherd for my local newspaper, the *Reading Eagle*. After a fairly lengthy discussion of humor writing, he asked if there was anything else I wanted to know. I jumped at the opportunity to go off-topic and quiz him about his Beatles *Playboy* Interview.

Since exaggeration, which Shepherd once described as “telescoping an experience,” was an integral part of his modus operandi, it's not surprising that some of his responses were seasoned with overstatement. What he remembered as his “six-week” adventure with the Beatles was probably closer to two weeks. Likewise, the extent to which the musicians were aware of Shepherd before his assignment is debatable; only two of his stories had been published in *PLAYBOY* prior to his Beatles tag-along.

Forthcoming with his recollections of being on the road with the band and adamant in his assertions, unpopular though they may be, Shepherd was nothing if not quotable. That portion of our 1982 conversation remained entirely unpublished—until now.

JIM GEORGE: Your interview with the Beatles was your first for *PLAYBOY*, right?

JEAN SHEPHERD: That was the only *Playboy* Interview I ever did, and it was only because the Beatles requested me. I wasn't a fan one way or

the other. I thought it would be interesting. I did it really as a favor to an editor at *PLAYBOY*.

GEORGE: So they were aware of your work?

SHEPHERD: Sure, they read *PLAYBOY*. See, if you have this idea that they were like great gods or something, well, you don't know *my* stature then. You have to understand that the Beatles thought of me as every bit their equal. It was really Brian Epstein who asked for me. He was a shrewd guy. *PLAYBOY* was at the height of its power. It was absolutely *the* big in-magazine. Epstein thought being in it would give them instant stature, and he was right. *PLAYBOY* was instrumental in the career of the Beatles. I traveled and lived with them on the road for about six weeks.

GEORGE: How much of that was recorded for the interview?

SHEPHERD: It was edited down from about 10 hours of tape. By the way, they were made to sound a lot funnier than they were. See, that's another part of the mythology. I think that piece set the tenor for the Beatles being funny. They actually weren't.

GEORGE: Was it doctored?

SHEPHERD: No, no. It was taking things out of context and changing them around so that you make them funny when they weren't. A lot of things were done that way, at least in *PLAYBOY*, in those days. They were producing an entertainment piece; they weren't trying to do an in-depth profile of world figures. Today, of course, we look upon any words of the Beatles as, like, graven in stone. Traveling around with the Beatles like I did is one of the things that made me very cynical about fame and talent. It confirmed a lot of things



HERITAGE

that I thought—that the press often can either tear you to pieces, make you look like a stupid fool even if you are Albert Schweitzer, or they can make you look like an unbelievable genius if they love you. Almost all the press that followed the Beatles were unbelievable fans.

GEORGE: To clarify, they did actually say all the quotes attributed to them, but they were rearranged?

SHEPHERD: Well, they didn't say *all* of them. [laughs] A couple of things my editor threw in and I objected to. I said, "Jesus, they're not that funny. They didn't say that." And he said, "Oh yeah, but wouldn't it have been great if they had?"

GEORGE: You have said that no one ever interfered with your work. Here's a case where they interfered.

SHEPHERD: No, they didn't interfere; they *added*. [laughs] I didn't give a damn about it. You're the only guy that has brought this piece up.

GEORGE: You've never been asked to discuss this?

SHEPHERD: Never. For Chrissake, I lived with them for weeks; I shared a room with Ringo. When they do these eternal rehashes of the Beatles' career, the *PLAYBOY* piece is never mentioned. It always surprised me, because it was the first worldwide publicity they got as persons, as personalities. That had never been done before.

GEORGE: In the *Playboy Interview* you said that John Lennon was "a rather cool customer, and far less hip than he's been made out to be."

SHEPHERD: It's true. I didn't care for him. We tangled many times. He was a very, very egotistical guy, for starters. I remember one little incident. We were in Dundee, and he said, "Go down and get me a pack of cigarettes." I said, "What was that?" He said, "Go get me a pack of cigarettes." And I said, "Well, there's nothing wrong with you." He looked at me for a long time, and the lines were then drawn. See, he was used to having toadies around, and I wasn't a toady.

GEORGE: You didn't find him witty in conversation at all?

SHEPHERD: No, no. [laughs] None of 'em were, actually. My belief is that when someone becomes famous, it begins to have a life of its own. In other words, if the pope says, "It's raining," then 5,000 people say, "My God! What insight!" Just because it's the pope. And that's what I think happened with the Beatles.

GEORGE: One line you wrote about George Harrison sticks in my mind: "He's a very likable chap—if he happens to like you."

SHEPHERD: It's absolutely true. He's got all the unpredictable charm of a hooded cobra. [laughs] I got along with Ringo better than any of them. Ringo had a real sense of humor. He

was truly the funniest; I don't set myself up as an expert on the Beatles, but I can tell you this. I had actual personal relationships with them. Hell, George used to call me in New York all the time when they'd come.

GEORGE: You kept in contact over the years?

SHEPHERD: Off and on, as our paths crossed. I talked to Paul a couple times. There was never any effort by me to call the Beatles. I'm not a Beatles fan.

GEORGE: In your introduction to the *Playboy Interview*, it seems as though you didn't see any greatness or magic. You honestly didn't see anything special in them?

SHEPHERD: There really wasn't. I think they were one of the greatest contrived media hypes of the century. I don't think they were that special.

GEORGE: Even in the later years?

SHEPHERD: Especially in the later years. [laughs] I'm not trying to put them down; I just think they were overblown. They did their thing, and they did it well. But Brian Epstein is the one that created the Beatles, not the Beatles. He could've taken four other guys and made the Beatles.

GEORGE: You actually believe that?

SHEPHERD: Oh, absolutely. I know it's sacrilegious. [laughs] But you call them the way you see them. ■

SHEP TALES

From Jean Shepherd's two dozen *PLAYBOY* short stories, we selected six of our early favorites



Red Ryder Nails the Hammond Kid (December 1965)
You'll shoot your eye out! A *Christmas Story* is rooted in this yarn of one boy's attempts to become the owner of a Red Ryder BB gun.



Scut Farkas and the Murderous Mariah (April 1967)
Forget marbles. Top-spinning is all the rage in this schoolyard story that features our young hero challenging the local thug for "top" honors.



The Secret Mission of the Blue-Assed Buzzard (September 1967)
Meant to be the first chapter in a book of Shep's Army stories, the collection never made it to print.



Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss (July 1968)
Summer vacation in southern Michigan means faulty cabin wiring, relentless mosquitoes and forgotten fishing gear...in other words, heaven.



Banjo Butt Meets Julia Child (December 1968)
Fine French cooking suddenly, shockingly, supplants the grunts' standard chow in this Army mess-hall mystery.



County Fair! (September 1969)
Dirt-track races, prize-pig contests, a fortune-telling chicken—the Indiana fairgrounds have it all, including upchuck-inducing carnival rides.



Playboy on Wheels

What's in a name? In the case of this magazine, a pretty good story about how one American-made classic inspired another

In September 1953, as Hugh Hefner worked tirelessly on *Stag Party*, his nascent men's magazine, he received a distressing letter. Change the title of your magazine, went the message from the law offices of publisher Official Magazine Corp., or face a trademark-infringement lawsuit. To Hefner's surprise, there already existed a men's publication named *Stag*—and they didn't want any marketplace confusion.

BY **DAN HYMAN**

The fledgling editor scrambled. It was just a few weeks before his first issue was supposed to go to press. What should the magazine be called? As Hefner recounted in his cartoon diary, he and Eldon Sellers—his friend and future advertising manager—set about brainstorming. *Top Hat, Gent, Sir, Satyr, Pan*—none felt quite right.

“How about PLAYBOY?” suggested Sellers. Several years earlier, his mother had worked in a sales office for a little-known automaker out of Buffalo, New York: the Playboy Motor Car Corporation.

“PLAYBOY—mmmmm,” Hefner said, smiling. “PLAYBOY! I like that!”



Top: The Playboy broke a time record in 1948. **Middle:** Lou Horwitz (right) and the Buffalo mayor at the January 1948 opening of the Playboy plant. **Above:** A sales brochure.

And so it was settled. In just a few years, the title would be synonymous with a lifestyle of pleasure and sophistication. But whatever happened to its namesake?

...

Founded in 1946 by Packard salesman turned branch manager Louis Horwitz and his partners Norm Richardson and Charlie Thomas, the Playboy Motor Car Corporation arrived at the vanguard of the post-World War II automotive boom. A slew of small manufacturers, including Playboy Motors, aimed to meet the growing demand for affordable cars. A first-generation immigrant from Russia, the hardworking Horwitz took pride in being a self-made man. In addition to working for Packard, at the time of Playboy Motors' launch Horwitz also owned used car lots in the Buffalo area.

“My grandfather saw a need for a second family car,” says David Kaplan, Horwitz's grandson. The postwar trend was for larger, longer cars, but Horwitz guessed that consumers would soon want something smaller.

After working for months on two different prototype cars, in 1947 Playboy Motors released its first model. A hardtop convertible

coupe, the 1948 Playboy came equipped with a 40-horsepower engine, a maximum speed of 75 miles per hour and a price tag of \$985. Designed to fit three adults across its sole bench seat, Horwitz's steel-bodied compact car was ahead of its time, but despite high customer interest and positive reviews, investors weren't biting.

Without funding for mass production, just 98 cars, including two station wagons, were made. In April 1949 the company declared bankruptcy. Although Horwitz fought to regain control of the firm, by early 1950 its assets were sold off. "It really took a toll on his life and health," Kaplan says. "He lost everything." Horwitz suffered a heart attack shortly after he lost Playboy Motors but survived and threw himself into a new career, this time in mutual funds. He passed away in 1965, when he was just 59.

...

Today fewer than 50 Playboy cars are believed to exist. Kaplan owns five (plus one for parts)—including the first and last ever built.

Other unusual American autos of the late 1940s, including the infamous Tucker cars, have achieved hallowed status among vintage-automobile collectors, regularly fetching upward of \$1 million. The Playboy, however, remains largely off the radar of many car aficionados. Like other antiques and rarities, the value of a Playboy car depends on its condition and backstory. Although Kaplan notes that one fully restored model that had won an Antique Automobile Club of America award may have recently sold for around \$80,000, he says a more reasonable estimate for an unrestored Playboy in driving condition is between \$25,000 and \$40,000.

Ed Howard snagged his Playboy for a comparative steal at \$10,000. The Orange County, California collector first became intrigued by the Playboy as a teenager in the 1970s when a black-and-white photo of Lou Costello caught his eye; the comedian was pictured behind the wheel of a car Howard didn't recognize. He and his brothers prided themselves on being able to identify any car they spotted, but Costello's stumped them. "We could not name this car," Howard says. While flipping through a car encyclopedia years later, he discovered the mystery compact was a Playboy. Putting a name to it renewed Howard's interest, and in 2001, after he spotted one for sale in *Hemmings Motor News*, he decided he had to have a Playboy. For more than a decade he has run a website dedicated to the car and to the company's history. Like Kaplan, he frequently takes his Playboy to auto shows.

"The reaction is always priceless," he says.



Top: Showroom Playboys. **Above left:** The dashboard of the last Playboy ever made; David Kaplan restored it. The vehicle wasn't finished by the time Playboy Motors went bankrupt. **Above right:** The engine compartment.

"A typical crowd of men in their 60s and 70s walk down the aisle and go, 'Oh yeah, that's a '57 Corvette.' And then they get to my car, they go, 'Huh? What's this?'"

In June 2002, on a lark, Howard penned a letter to Hefner. Was the world-famous publication, he asked, truly named after the obscure car from Buffalo? And by the way, would Hef ever want to go out for a spin in a Playboy? Much to Howard's surprise, a response quickly arrived in his mailbox. "I was absolutely dumbfounded," Howard recalls with a laugh. "It was so amazingly fast."

"Dear Ed," Hefner had typed on magazine letterhead. "The Playboy name was suggested by a friend whose mother had worked at the then defunct Playboy Motor Car company." With that, the story was confirmed (and the invitation politely declined).

...

Kaplan says his family has always been pleased

that Hefner found inspiration in the Playboy automobile. In a way, a small part of Horwitz's company survives thanks to the magazine. "It's a great name and a pretty cool thing for us," Kaplan says.

Making sure his grandfather's work is not forgotten has become something of an avocation for him. Kaplan has loaned his various Playboys to the Northeast Classic Car Museum in Norwich, New York and regularly shows them at auto rallies around the country. This summer he participated in a classic-car gathering outside Buffalo, where 15 of the vehicles were on display—the most Playboys in one place since 1948. One of his restored Playboys, the first ever made, sports a vanity plate in honor of Horwitz: TRIBUTE.

"I want people to know about this car that he built here in Buffalo and that he put his whole heart and soul into," Kaplan says. "His dream will live on."

SAVING THE SIGN

BY CAT AUER

Hugh Hefner—the man responsible for countless fantasies—worked to preserve America's symbol of dreams





Left: Bunnies surround John Roche at the August 1978 “Bon Voyage Hollywood Sign” event. **Top:** Chevy Chase performs at the November 1978 gala. **Above:** A banner supporting the “save the sign” cause drapes the D.

At all hours of the day, every day, nearly three dozen security cameras cover Los Angeles’s most well-known star, a celebrity that has managed—with significant help from a special friend—the feat of growing old in Tinseltown, turning 95 this year. The VIP is none other than the famed Hollywood sign, and PLAYBOY founder Hugh Hefner the benefactor who helped save it not once but twice.

Instantly recognizable as the geographic marker denoting the world’s entertainment capital, as well as a symbol of hopes and dreams, the sign’s origin story is relatively unglamorous. In 1923 real estate developer Harry Chandler wanted to lure buyers to the steep, scrub-covered plots north of downtown. His associate John Roche sketched what would be a hillside ad—13 enormous block letters spelling out the planned neighborhood’s name: Hollywoodland. Built for \$21,000 (the equivalent

of more than \$300,000 today) in the days when television was still in its infancy, the wood-and-steel billboard was meant to come down after 18 months. Yet through the Great Depression and World War II, the letters remained. By 1949 the Hollywoodland subdivision had flopped, television had become part of American life, and the sign was still standing—albeit with a crumbling *H* and other obvious signs of decay.

“That’s when the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the city of Los Angeles got together, gave the sign a makeover and turned it into the leading lady of the film industry,” says Chris Baumgart, longtime chair of the nonprofit Hollywood Sign Trust, which is tasked with the sign’s maintenance. The 1949 refurb repaired the *H* and removed the last four letters entirely; it was in this incarnation that it received landmark status from the L.A. Cultural Heritage Board in 1973. Yet the renovation wasn’t enough; the sheet metal construction couldn’t withstand the elements. By 1978 it was clear the sign needed major help. Most of the letters, pocked with rust and weakened by termite-infested support beams, had been damaged beyond repair by a violent winter windstorm.

Hefner, at that point a relative newcomer to Los Angeles but a lifelong fan of movies and the glamour the sign had come to represent, offered to lend a hand. His \$150-a-plate Playboy Mansion party, complete with a mini replica of the sign in the Mansion yard, raised \$45,000 and attracted celebrities such as Rita Hayworth, Bob Newhart and Andy Williams. Shortly before the gathering, singer Alice Cooper had dedicated \$27,700 to the cause, an amount Williams and others matched. Stoked by the efforts of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, the post-party total raised to “save the sign” reached \$250,000.

Demolition took place in August 1978—but not before a “bon voyage” event for the sign was held, complete with speeches from Hef and others. For three months the world was signless as the landmark was rebuilt on the same Cahuenga Peak location where it originally stood, with helicopters ferrying 15-foot, 14,000-pound steel I-beams up the hillside to create supports for each 45-foot-tall letter. “The sign you see today was built to last,” says Baumgart. Its restoration was celebrated at a November 1978 gala at the Griffith Observatory, with Chevy Chase delivering entertainment and many other stars in attendance. But the sign wasn’t quite out of danger.

...

Imagine the shining white letters of the Hollywood sign but with luxury estates crowding the land above and behind the *H*. Such a vision was close to becoming reality: In 2010 developers were exploring the possibility of building mansions there. But, they said, for \$12.5 million by April 30, a nonprofit conservation organization could purchase the 138 acres of land and keep the “view shed” clear. Major grants made up the bulk of the funds, but the sum was falling short just weeks before the deadline. When Hefner found out, he quickly agreed to cover the difference. As he told *People* magazine, “It would have been a real shame after having restored it if it wound up sold.”

“It took the sign’s number one fan to come forward again and carry the fund-raising effort across the finish line with his closing gift of nearly \$1 million,” says Baumgart, who traveled to the Mansion to pick up Hef’s check.

Civic gratitude for Hefner’s dedication to the landmark was plentiful: Institutions including the Los Angeles City Historical Society, the Trust for Public Land and the California Legislature honored him. Perhaps the certificate of recognition awarded to him in December 2010 by the city of Los Angeles for his help keeping the hillside free of development said it best: “Every time you look at the Hollywood Hills,” the award read, “you will know that you made a permanent, beautiful, living contribution to the people of the City of Los Angeles.” ■



Lenna Sjööblom

NOVEMBER 1972 PLAYMATE



When Lenna Sjööblom posed for **PLAYBOY**—wearing little more than a feathered floppy hat, a pink boa and an arresting gaze—the Swedish model had no idea she would become part of computer history. Shot by Dwight Hooker, Lenna’s Centerfold (right) played a key role in the development of electronic image processing after engineers at the University of Southern California chose it as a test photo in 1973. Grabbing a colleague’s magazine, the researchers scanned the modest upper third of the fold-out and included it in a conference paper. By the time the digital revolution dawned years later, it had been used countless times as a basis for judging compression effects, the photo’s precision-perfect detail, shading and texture making it a useful tool. In the world of computer imaging, Lenna became known as “the first lady of the internet.”

It would never have happened if Lenna hadn’t visited her cousin in Chicago and then decided to stick around after quickly landing gigs as a model. America’s independent streak also attracted her. “The modeling work may have influenced my decision to stay,” she said, “but I think it was more the freedom here.” Not only did Lenna help lay the foundation for JPEG and MPEG standards (and become the fantasy pinup for plenty of computer programmers), the issue she appeared in also became the most popular **PLAYBOY** of all time. Forget breaking the internet—Lenna helped make it.









HERITAGE

Morgan Fox

DECEMBER 1990 PLAYMATE



“I like to push myself to the limit just to see what I can do.” Indeed, Morgan Fox seems to frequently occupy life at its extremes, be it her dramatic good looks, her height (she clocks in at nearly six feet tall) or her adventurous approach to a good time. The British Columbia native was an equestrian with a competitive streak: In addition to horseback riding, Morgan participated in steer-roping and barrel-racing contests at rodeos. And at the age of 18 she won the crown of Miss World Canada. Two years later, the skiing enthusiast (and possible adrenaline junkie) had taught herself slalom racing, which she ably demonstrated during her pictorial photo shoot. A personal trainer, Morgan was a dedicated gym rat committed to her conditioning. “Physical fitness and exercise have been my life since I was a little girl,” she said. “I can’t imagine not caring about my body and not caring *for* my body.”







Classic Cartoons



"Do you have any games that can be played in bed by two or more consenting adults?"



"Number three, let's hear you say 'Cut the Merry Christmas crap and put your wallets and watches in the bag.'"



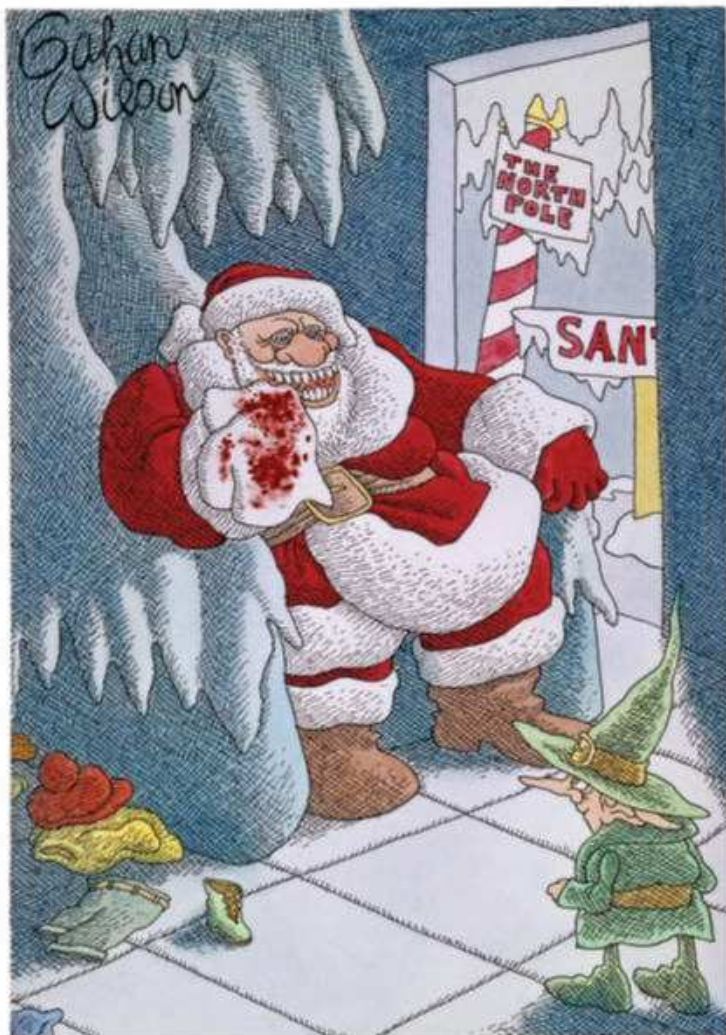
"Merciful heavens! This is no time for extended orgasms!"



*"It's been such a perfect evening...the sleigh bells,
the softly falling snow, the blow job."*



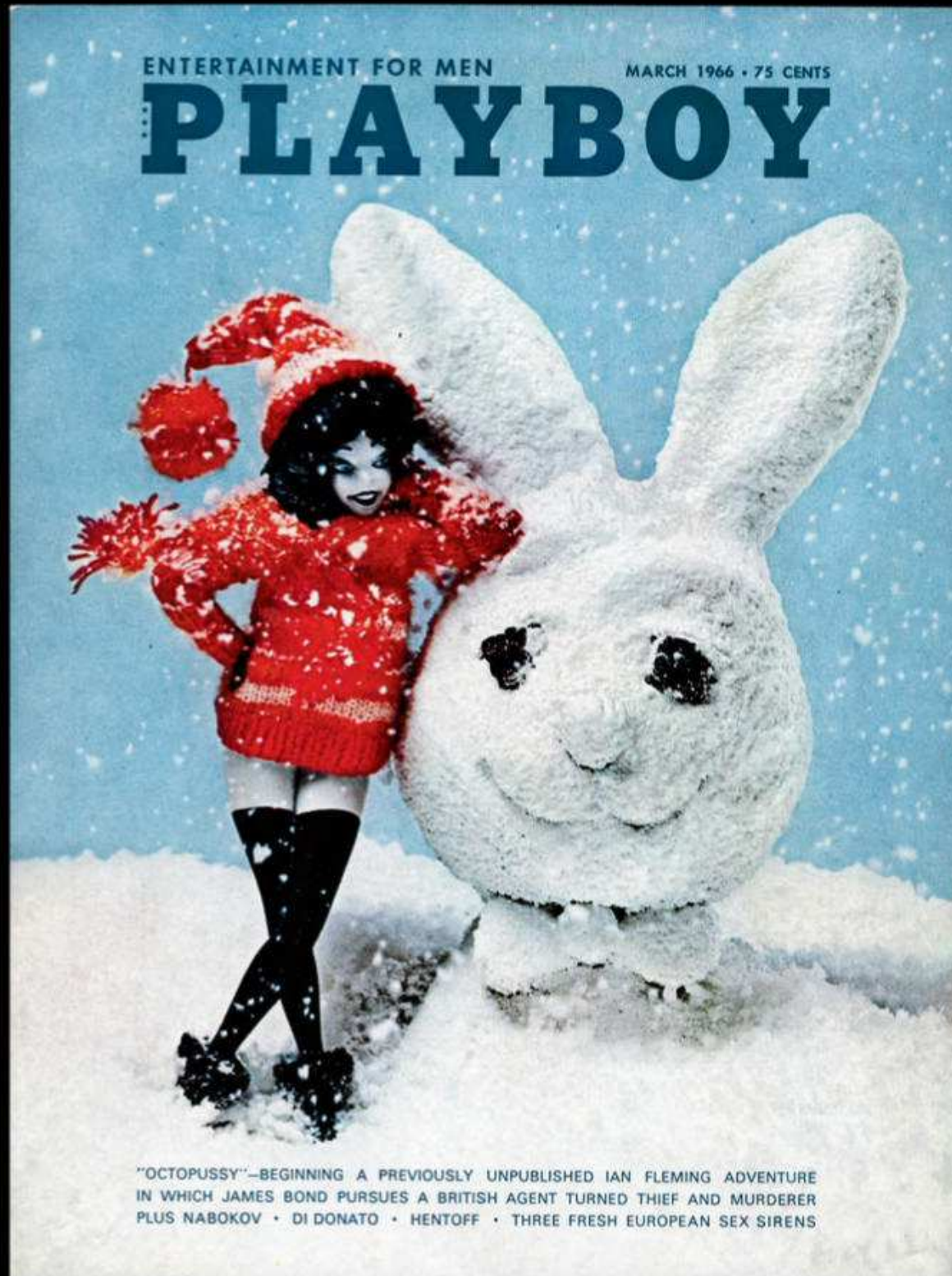
*"No screwups this year, Frankie.
The ones on this list get a fruitcake. The ones
on this list get whacked."*



"Bring in another."



*"I was going through that naughty-or-nice routine for the
millionth time when suddenly it hit me—who am I to judge?"*



CHICAGO, 1965

Below: The art and photo staffs prepare our Femlin and a Mr. Playboy “snowman” for their close-up, which would grace the March 1966 cover (above). **From left:** Picture Editor Vincent Tajiri and photographer J. Barry O’Rourke set the scene; Art Director Arthur Paul primps the Femlin, sculpted by Austin Fox; an unidentified assistant makes it “snow” for O’Rourke.





 **PLAYBOY** SHOP.com



Thank you, USA! It has certainly been real.



moods of norway